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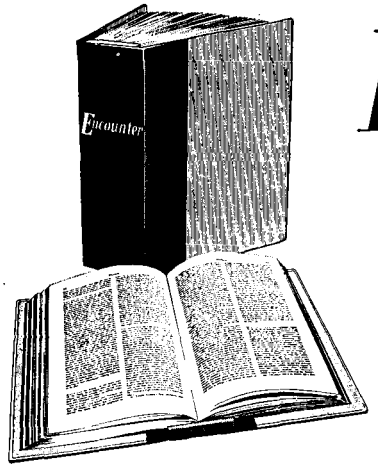

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Malcolm Bradbury

A Goodbye for Evadne Winterbottom

PERHAPS I SHOULD BEGIN by saying that in all that follows I write, if a little frankly, as a professional man.

From time to time, then, in my capacity as a welfare psychiatrist, with a special responsibility for the young persons in this provincial city, I am approached by people and asked what else there is one can do with sex besides have it. That's to say, there are, I find, many people, perfectly sensible people, who have a very natural desire to know in just what way the climate of sexual permissiveness and anti-chastity which is now our culture may be said to benefit them, give them something, enlarge their beings. "If we live in a more permissive age, that may be our good fortune," say the advertisements for some new monthly magazine in endless monthly parts, with a nude family on the cover, devoted to the topic of you, and me, and mankind; middle-aged ladies in the suburbs, shop-keepers down at the crossroads, clip this out, or things like it, and then ring me up, usually in the late evening, to ask just what it is that they mean. How? What good fortune? It isn't easy to answer, and I have to respond very carefully. *Very* carefully; for, of course, these night-callers might equally well be avid, punitive, radical ladies, devoted readers of *Forum*, asking for experimental sex-play in the nursery schools. In my position, one is always walking such a delicate line. And what, then, can one do with sex besides have it? Well: one can make a personal politics out of it, change and be changed by it, earn a new self and a new consciousness. Or so Evadne Winterbottom says.

Perhaps I sound a trifle uncertain; the truth of the matter is indeed that I'm beset by a good liberal ambivalence. I have hopes for us all; I have fears for us too. And in any case, as a professional man, one is caught. Take, for example, one quite important part of my duties, which is to visit the local schools and give small sex education lectures. These usually take place in an atmosphere of high solemnity, invigilated by the headmaster or headmistress and a surprisingly large contingent of other staff who happen, they say, to have a free period. I have no doubt that some of them also have enough change in their pockets and purses to ring their local M.P., while others are in close touch with the local chapter of Women's Liberation. The delicacy required of me! How do I act? What do I say? I come in a dark suit, carrying a small brown suitcase. I look authoritative. I point out to the children the location and character of their genital organs, and say a little about their multifarious uses; I comment that some stimulation of these properties or appendages—which are not, I carefully stress, novel to the possessor but are common attributes in mankind—by their very owner will not lead to blindness or hideous tragedy; I divide these physiological attributes into two distinct classes, or as we say sexes, and point out their complementarity and potential conjunctiveness; I remark on the fact that that conjunction, when actualised, can have highly productive consequences; I speak of the need for forethought and scruple; I indicate, gently, that there are means and instruments by which the productive aspect of the process may be by-passed. Over the whole I cast, a little sweat standing on my upper lip, an atmosphere of humanism and enlightenment. It is, I explain to them all, more than crude

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practical information I am trying to give them, not a description of an abstract, primitive technology but a species of human feeling and human wisdom. Ignorance is, I say in my crescendo, blindness and folly; but knowledge and managed emotion is mastery. On the other hand, in deference to the newer spirits in the audience, I add a few touches about the desirability of the fullest self-expression, the power of passions fulfilled. There is no aspect of the rhetoric that is not charged, no phrase that can go unconsidered. The teachers round the walls whisper among themselves and make extensive notes; afterwards they have post-mortems with me over tea and buns round the staffroom table. "You mean you try to please everybody?" demands Evadne Winterbottom. "Oh, you're a fink. Maybe a kind-hearted fink; but a fink." "I'm a fink deep down too: in my unconscious, and even a psychiatrist can have an unconscious, I'm a fink," I say to Evadne Winterbottom, who understands.

WHY DO I FEEL guilty? Of course one reason is that, inevitably enough, quite a few of the children feel compelled to put the knowledge I have conveyed to them to the test: project-work connected with the class. They think, and in this they are simply sensing the obvious contradiction, that what I am offering them is not description but advocacy. Perhaps, in a sense, I am. This in turn frequently brings them back to see me in different circumstances ("But I thought, Dr Denison, I thought you said it was abortion that came first and contraception was what we might fall back on?" "Do you habitually reverse things in other areas? Telephone numbers, for instance?" "But, Dr Denison, we only had half an hour; and then there was a French vocabulary test. There's so much to learn in schools these days."). I make some arrangements over the telephone; they go; I sit back in my chair, behind my desk, and squirm. I ought not to have a desk, which is an alienation device, but it's there in the room and the room is so small that I cannot but use it. Why do I squirm? They are expanding, growing, becoming the newer, freer people; later 20th-century man. As a psychiatrist, I have naturally learned and come to venerate the good news out of Vienna; I know what a contorted hothouse all that old Victorian repression creates. After all, it was the hothouse I still grew up in myself, and not so long ago. I believe it took me about eight years of desultory—and highly anxious—curiosity before I was able to put two and two together about how you put one and one together, though of course it was largely this state of ignorance, along with the fact that it appeared to be shared by all my peers, male and female, that maintained me in a state of virginity until my late teens, when I acquired both the knowledge and a bicycle and was able to ride out and mend matters. My young have been spared all that; has it made them better? "Of course they're better; they're not hung up about it. You're the one who's hung up, still, and you're supposed to be a psychiatrist, correct me if I'm wrong," says Evadne Winterbottom.

It may be so; and a good man ought to know himself. But, as a professional man, one's aims are practical: to get on with the day-to-day work of welfare. ("Welfare? Ill-fare," says Evadne Winterbottom.) Twice a week I set off from home, kissing my wife, and attend my small clinic, which is held in a nonconformist chapel not far from the centre of town. The chapel itself is early 19th century, but has modern—which is to say prefabricated—addenda. There is a large hut, split up into several rooms, large and small, which is the focus of all kinds of communal activity. I am in it now, writing these notes. A playgroup meets here in the mornings, bringing the neighbourhood three- and four-year-olds from their limited home backgrounds into this larger world where they can urinate on the radiators and aid adult helpmeets stick coloured paper on to toilet rolls, and so fashion figures of what they call man. And maybe man it is; who is to say not? I look now at a row of these artefacts, sitting there on the window-ledge, and ask myself, why trust Michelangelo, finally, more than these? On most afternoons there is a children's clinic, issuing orange-juice and inoculating babies; on one, by a kind of strategic obverse, a Family Planning Clinic, issuing diaphragms and creams, at first to the neighbourhood married women but more recently, after a brief sit-in, to the neighbourhood single too. I am on the committee, and so is the chapel's Minister, a most helpful and

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enlightened man who also runs a Youth Club here in the evenings, and who on FPC days patrols outside, looking out for the occasional young girls who peer in through the windows, a little hopelessly, and asking them kindly if they would like to come in and, as he puts it, get fitted. There is a modest modern heroism in all this, a putting right, a making possible. "Impersonal bureaucracy," says Evadne Winterbottom; "We're devoted," I tell her.

And so here I come in attendance, two days a week, with a nurse, Miss Rickett, advising on emotional and mental health problems, especially for those at school. The desk in the little office, the desk at which I write, is the same one used by the female doctor who attends the FPC, the male uncle doctor who does the children's clinic. Their detritus is in the drawers; and the uncle-doctor, for pacificatory purposes, or perhaps for some profounder iconic need, keeps a toy rubber Noddy on top of the desk—an object I always want to move during my own sessions, though for some odd reason I have never had the courage to do so. It gives its rubbery nod to me now. I of course have my own distinctive supplies: bottles of ink for inkblot tests, pictures for free association games, etc. It may sound dull and routine; I may sound a dull and routine person. But the mothers in the terraced houses, the children who play in the condemned property up the street, the bootboys who meet on the waste ground, the middle classes up past the traffic-lights, have all come to depend on us, know we are here and ready to spread our professional skills through the immediate universe of anxiety, tension, social problems. Most of the cases I see are straightforward and familiar: boys and girls who steal, or vandalise, or wet the bed, or fail unaccountably at school, or run away, or are found by their teachers or doctors or parents disturbed or highly strung. Miss Rickett has one approach: a large, healthy lady who is also on the local council, she inclines to the view that, as she puts it, "God gave them bottoms to be smacked on." I have another, more professional and I hope more generous. Even so, people are people and problems are problems and we usually manage in our way to agree and, more important, to alleviate. Only on occasion is there a more complicated, more challenging, even more threatening case. Let me take, for instance, to choose an example purely at random, the case of—as I had better call her to preserve the confidentialities of the consulting room—the case of Patient X.

PATIENT X is unusual among my visitors, in that she has now left school (she took A-levels last summer and has spent the last six months "dropping out, hanging round, trying it all," as she puts it) and also in the fact that there is, in a sense, nothing whatsoever wrong with her. She does have a marked manic depressive cycle, with periods of high elation followed by periods of considerable depression, usually relieved by tranquillising drugs which she gets from a variety of sources, none of them me; it is also true that she forms unusual, disturbing relationships, runs away from time to time, and so on. However, her problem is basically that she has a need to consult professional people, men older than herself but not too old, who can understand and explore her situation. In fact she had seen quite a large number of advisers of various kinds, in different areas, before she came to me, having initially succeeded in persuading her doctor that such consultations were the only thing that made her feel good. Obviously, in order to obtain such consultations and maintain them over a period, she has to have problems; but the sort of life she lives is such as never to leave her short of material. She frequents storm-centres and disaster-areas: breaking marriages, collapsing communes, nightclubs with two-way mirrors. "I've always had problems," she told me on her first visit, when she was still in the sixth form, "If I didn't have problems I wouldn't know I even existed. The odd thing is that they've never sent me to see *you* before. Why do you think that is? I mean, aren't I just the sort of patient you need?" The early sessions, while she was still at school, were fairly straightforward, and largely taken up by a discussion of the previous consultations she had had with others. Now I ought at once to explain that I am, naturally enough, highly committed to the ethics of my profession, and it is certainly not my custom to probe into treatments prescribed by others. In this case, however, I immediately struck upon an unusual di-

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lemma: that her previous consultations and the problems she now had were intimately associated. The problem, simply, was this: she had developed an emotional pattern of intense dependence upon her advisers and then acquired a syndrome of rejection, or psychic hurt, when the professional context—as well as the fact that most of these advisers were married men—had cut short the development of that emotional set. I immediately told her, of course, that this was familiar enough in all forms of psycho-somatic treatment, in that patients became excessively dependent on their doctors; the one unusual feature was the startlingly high degree of recurrence, the same pattern having occurred seven times. Naturally, I made it quite clear that mine should be the final course of treatment, and that the pattern should not be allowed to repeat itself. "Well, I think you've really managed to work your way round to the heart of the problem," said Patient X, very admiringly, "but do you really think we can do it?"

I explained to her how we should proceed. "I want to lay down some guidelines from the start," I said. "The important thing is to have the atmosphere firmly defined, without soft edges. So the treatment must always remain completely impersonal. It must always occur in this consulting room." I waved my hand at the room, the Noddy on the desk. "Well, that's what they've all said," said Patient X, leaning forward in her chair with an anxious look, "But how can treatment be completely impersonal, when it's about me, and my feelings . . . and when in any case you'll want to ask me all sorts of very intimate questions about my sexual behaviour, and I'll have to acquire personal confidence in you for the treatment to be effective?" "We can manage all that from here," I said firmly. "And let's be clear about this. You must never, for example, telephone me at home—unless, of course, some serious emergency, of a genuinely psychic kind, occurs." "Maybe you'd better write down your telephone number, then," said Patient X, "just to reassure me on that." As I say, one occasionally gets this kind of more complicated—though in fact not unfamiliar—case. "Another point," I said, putting down my pen. "One of the dangers in this type of treatment is that the patient has always a vested interest in prolonging it. I've had, for example, patients who severely resent the fact that I have other patients to see. For that reason the sessions must be exactly timed. You must arrive here promptly, and leave promptly when I say they've ended." Patient X rose to protest, putting her hands on my desk. "But how am I to get to know you well enough to trust you?" she asked. "Please sit down," I said. Patient X seated herself and grew calmer. "The trouble with this sort of professionality, and don't forget I'm used to it, is that it stands in the way of my ever getting help," she said. "But you must ask yourself what, in your case, would really constitute help? What would satisfy me would be for you to go away not needing any further treatment from any source. Isn't that what we're after?" Patient X nodded. "Very well, then," I said. "The problem is therefore for me to overcome your feeling that you must always *have* help, to break the syndrome of dependence. It's three-thirty, and you must go now." "You're just like all the others," said Patient X. "You don't trust me, you don't care about me. I'm just half an hour's worth of problem to you, straight in, straight out, so you can get paid." I see from my notes on this case, which are out on the desk in front of me, that on that occasion Patient X left at four-fifteen; and that a similar difficulty prevailed throughout all the early sessions, until we developed a more effective routine. Throughout those early sessions I noticed Miss Rickett getting more and more irritated with the patient; that, moreover, she never once left the room during these consultations. This was unusual, for the sessions were, as I say, prolonged, and Miss Rickett, like many heavy tea-drinkers, has to visit the lavatory quite frequently. In fact I often noticed her wriggling uncomfortably. But Miss Rickett, stern in her way, has my best interest ever at heart, and once even ejected Patient X by main force when her too-lengthy presence put at risk my attendance at an important meeting of the FPC committee.

WELL, AS I SAY, the case of Patient X is simply an instance of my work, chosen utterly at random; and you would hardly want me to bore you with further details. Suffice it to say that the treatment was, inevitably, extended; the file in front of me is thick with scribbled notes. As time went on,

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and we got into the elaborate details of Patient X's life-story, actions, feelings, explored at the most prolonged, over-detailed length, Miss Rickett took to falling asleep in boredom. This, curiously, alleviated the atmosphere considerably. We got on to new levels of frankness, even of interest; Patient X stopped resisting the conventions of the situation; the treatment began to go well. I also on the odd occasion did see Patient X outside the consulting room. Once, after a particularly trying afternoon with a mature nine-year-old, caught making obscene telephone calls to our Lady Mayoress, I slipped into the Windjammer bar of a local pub, the Pineapple, and leaned against an old ship's wheel drinking sherry and puffing my pipe. "Hi," said a girl with a very large hat and a very small dress, with long black hair; it was Patient X. "Take me somewhere," she said. "You're with someone," I pointed out. "He can wait till tomorrow," said Patient X. "He won't mind." "My wife's cooking steak for me," I said. "See you," said Patient X, and went out of the door with her companion, a young man with long hair dyed silver-grey. I went home and ate steak. Another such occasion, rather more substantial in nature, occurred rather late at night, when someone who said she was her flat-mate telephoned me at home to advise me that Patient X was talking of suicide, and was in a serious condition. It shows the awkward human dramas we have to work with; perhaps I should briefly report it.

I WENT TO THE FLAT, at the top of a small house not far from the clinic, a cavernous wreck of a Victorian building which had been turned into cheap rooms, mostly occupied by students. I found the numbered room, tapped on the door (there was no bell), and was admitted by the flat-mate. Patient X lay in the living room, groaning on a rather broken and hideously patterned old sofa, of a type picked up for a few shillings in the junk shops. I looked at her and it was immediately clear that she was extremely drunk; in fact an empty bottle of Scotch, which the flat-mate told me she had brought home full that evening, stood on the floor beside her. "Has she said anything?" I asked the flat-mate. "Just that she was going to kill herself," said the flat-mate, "and that I must call you and tell you so." "He left me, he left me," said Patient X from the sofa. I had no great difficulty in guessing who "he" was, since we had had a consultation the previous day, and she had told me, with some enthusiasm and a great deal of specific detail, about her latest boy-friend. It was, I had known for some time, Patient X's habit to frequent the cocktail bar of the most expensive hotel in the city centre and be constantly taken away from it, in sports cars, for adventurous purposes, by rich young men who had horses or yachts and were about to inherit the family business. The ones who seemed to interest her most were usually either married, or engaged to be married, or divorced: the ones who, as she put it, cried in bed, and were usually in the middle of some enormous, tangled, emotional contradiction, the ones she could help. It was a very familiar syndrome with Patient X; indeed it was virtually the story of her life, and, of course, the basis and foundation of her capacity to have problems requiring advice, treatment, and solution. The latest boy-friend—who was divorced, engaged to be re-married, and also sleeping with Patient X's best friend—had promised to take Patient X to Corfu with him, on a business trip, at the weekend; clearly, for any one of a hundred reasons, all predictable, this had collapsed. "Has he been here?" I asked the flat-mate. "Yes," she said, adding, by way of explanation, "he's decided to become homosexual." Patient X put a languid hand out in my direction and said, "You must help me." I resolved on a cool course of action. "I think you ought to be put to bed," I said. "And then you must come and see me tomorrow afternoon." I should explain that threatening suicide is a means frequently used by patients to obtain supplementary treatment.

"Yes, put me to bed," said Patient X. "You know, I was just going to suggest that." The flat-mate and I carried Patient X, not a small girl, from the sitting room into her bedroom, her long black hair hanging down nearly to the floor. "There's my clock and there's my radio and that's my mirror," said Patient X, dropping down heavily into the bed. The long mirror in the ancient wardrobe, equally junk-shop, had been described to me in many long sessions while Miss Rickett had slept, along with many practices that Patient X had

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performed before it. In fact, there were few details of the room that had not been portrayed to me in some circumstance or other; I felt I knew it utterly already, being surrounded by a corroboration of the erotic and emotional evidence. "Where are her nightthings?" I asked. "You know I don't wear any," said Patient X, and I felt almost embarrassed, for that too was a part of this scene and setting as it had been told to me. Between us, the flat-mate and I undressed Patient X, who giggled, caressed the hair on her lower stomach affectionately, and asked the flat-mate to fetch her some Horlicks, an improbable touch in the situation. "Now you must go straight to sleep, and come and see me at the clinic tomorrow afternoon," I said, pulling the duvet over her big naked self. "For goodness' sake, it may be too late," said Patient X. "How can I possibly get through to tomorrow afternoon? How can I get through the night?" "You're not so bad, just drunk and upset," I said. "Go to sleep." Patient X sobbed and said, "Why won't you help me? How can you leave me like this? Impersonal bureaucracy!" "We're devoted," I said. "Devoted," said Patient X. "You're so stuck being a doctor you can't be a person and do something for me when it really matters." "I will, tomorrow," I said, patting her arm. "Help, help, help," cried Patient X, grabbing my arm and moving over to one side of the bed. "How can you care about me there, with that fat nurse slobbering in her chair? Care for me now." I then had a discussion about the impersonality of treatment, of a type already reported, and hardly worth detaining you with; and it was some long time before I was able at last to get away. None the less, the entire episode gave me a vastly deeper and more personal insight into the problem with which I was dealing, and a new comprehension of my utter lack of success. I brooded on it as I tottered down the stairs, dank and, at this hour, unlit. "Traitor," shouted Patient X, a long, rounded, white, naked, unsteady figure framed in her bedroom window as I walked, with only one glance back, down the path to my car, to go and report myself in at home.

WELL, THERE YOU have it, then, just one among the many hundreds of cases I have to deal with: one with its exceptional features, yes, but typical enough in its way. Perhaps I should just add, to alleviate any anxieties, that, as I had expected throughout, Patient X did come to see me the following afternoon. She stood in the doorway, still a little unsteady, a big yellow hat on her head. I sat behind the desk, with its wobbly Noddy, and said "What are your symptoms?" as she stepped inside. Miss Rickett took one look and promptly fell asleep, a conditioned reflex if ever I saw one. Patient X looked at me. "Some people say 'How are you?' and not 'What are your symptoms?' " she said. "Let me ask you, 'What are *your* symptoms?' " I had carefully planned out beforehand what I was to say to Patient X on her arrival: I intended to point out to her that her problems were self-induced, that she put herself in their way, and that simply by changing the pattern of her life and expectations, looking for different people and different situations, she could avoid them. I began to say this, but Patient X said again, "What are your symptoms?" Then, looking at me, speaking quickly, she pointed out what she said were some of the most obvious: a nervous twitching of the limbs, heavy smoking amounting to an obvious oral fixation, a marked tendency to withdrawal from human contact, and emotional regression. She observed that I am highly communicative in my professional function, because here I can work within abstractions, institutionalised modes of conduct and address, and predetermined situations managed by myself; but that I used my role as a disguise for my obvious inadequacies and problems. I was apt to shelter away from normal emotional situations and demands; I vacillated and ran with prevailing opinion, either because I had no inner convictions or, rather more likely, a lack of will which would enable me to formulate and assert them; I compromised with life; and I subordinated and internalised all my expectations and desires. I was old, she said, more than thirty, which was a difficult time; I was married, and ten years married, which was a dangerous period; and I had assumed the role of an envious observer of others, a posture which enabled me to release energy and need by fixating it in the lives of my patients.

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Realising that Patient X was taking advantage of the situation arising from our out-of-hours contact, I stood up behind the desk, knocking over the Noddy, and said angrily: "Look, I reserve the right to make all the diagnoses here." The noise disturbed Miss Rickett, who started awake, looked around nervously, and mumbled, in another conditioned reflex, "God gave them bottoms to be smacked on." "Go to sleep, Miss Rickett," I said. "Is this really what you want to do, really?" cried Patient X, gesturing at the tiny cubicle of a room. "Is this what you wanted your life to be? Is this your final conception of a satisfying existence?" "It's a job," I said, "a calling. One gets one's gratifications, helping people." "Well, there's the difference between us," said Patient X, taking off her hat. "I can explain my problems. I have problems because I expect everything. I expect people to take all they can: me, and everything else. I expect delight, in me and you and everyone. I expect them to cut through the hang-ups and the limitations, and leave their dull lives and their dull wives, and throw up their careers, and take me to Corfu, and see what they've missed." "I see," I said. "I can explain your solutions too," said Patient X. "You have solutions because you think people should make do with anything, just the way you have, and hold themselves tight, and not ask for more. But, really, you have the problems, and I have the solutions." "You may be right," I said; as I remarked earlier, I suffer from a good liberal ambivalence. "All right, look, I dare you," said Patient X. "Get up from that desk. Put away your pipe. Take me to Corfu. We'll sit on the beach and we'll write a book reforming psychiatry and we'll go to bed a lot and you can see all you've missed. That's what I've been trying to tell you; that's the only way through this absurd, empty situation." "He's not going to Corfu," said Miss Rickett. "He's going to a meeting of the Family Planning Committee. Time's up." And, ever having my interests at heart, she bundled Patient X to the door. "Fink," said Patient X in the doorway, and then she was gone.

OF COURSE, such disturbances are an absolutely normal and routine part of the professional life of those who devote themselves to helping others. One expects it. None the less there is more to life than context; there is an inner me. (As Evadne Winterbottom says: "A public self is all you are. What about the universe within?") There are times when I suspect that too much psychic self-awareness does not save a man; it impairs his ability to function. Of course, given my job, such a view leads to ambivalence (*"Mauvaise foi,"* says Evadne Winterbottom, who is an intelligent girl, and has read Sartre); even so, I feel I have proved it myself in the way I have maintained the workaday competence of my own professional life. But one *can* be disturbed by such events, such inruptions, shaken in the self; and I have to confess that on this particular day I was less than usually devoted to the affairs of the FPC, and that I went home in a considerable state of depression. The exact nature of my malaise was not clear to me; nor would self-analysis dislodge it. The phrases of the afternoon, the invitation, dwelt in my head. I considered talking it all over with my wife, Laura, but that seemed less than feasible. She is an attractive, positive, and understanding woman, a point of good sense in life, but the stability of our relationship is based, like most relationships, on compromise, on things left unsaid, dissatisfactions unarticulated. In any case, my wife is pre-Freudian; she lives mentally in the 19th-century vision of man, and above all woman, as separate, cloistered, impenetrable, chaste. If our ideas of selfhood are emblematised in architecture, Laura belongs not to the picture-window, open-plan era, but the period of the servant-guarded entrance, the long corridor, the inner sanctum. I say she is pre-Freudian, but that's inaccurate. She is anti-Freudian, and puts Freud in his place. The politics of desire, says Evadne Winterbottom! Laura does not believe in such things for a moment. She simply makes it clear, as an intelligent, inner-directed woman, that Freud's view that sexuality is the basic human drive is a local problem, an obsession appropriate only to the heated frenzies of decadent, bourgeois, turn-of-the-century, provincial Vienna, and not to the modern England of today. Laura has gazed on sex; but she has found joy and release in other things. I realised this soon after our marriage, when I made Laura write down her dreams; they were wild sexual frenzies but they defied interpretation, until,

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one day, I grasped that they were a displaced symbolism reflecting suppressed anxieties about her deficiencies as a cook. Since then the pattern has become clear. In sex and orgasm Laura is willing and competent, but rational and controlled; however, she expresses a violent unconscious life of passion and will, a vital energy of self, a frenzied Lawrentian merging assimilativeness, in the production of, for instance, *canard à l'orange*. No, I came home, looked at her dark, hard, preoccupied face, and did not speak to her of my upset with Patient X.

Yet, I have to confess, a quiet agony persisted; and, if only to show you how professional life does inevitably spill over into private, to show, in a way, that we are human, I must tell you that what followed was an interlude of strange behaviour on my own part. That night, sitting in my small study, in fact the converted rear portion of our garage, driven heady, I suppose, by the temper of the times, the conversation of the day, the feeling of the overwhelming modern merging of the public and the pubic, I found myself compelled, somehow, to draw Laura's attention to a certain sense of incompleteness, of want, that I found coursing through me. What I did I did, I think, with delicacy: not wanting to disturb a valuable, valued harmony. That night, after Laura was in bed, I left a number of small cards around the house, under vases where she cleaned, in the medicine cupboard in the bathroom, in the refrigerator. The cards were simply inscribed and unsigned: they said things like *Shudder more, Try other positions,* and *Biting is not wrong*. Two days later I checked: the cards were all gone. Thereafter in bed I was devoutly analytical, looking for signs of a change, a change that would change me; and yet, too, in a state of fearful trepidation, horrified that I might have upset the form and order of our relationship. But nothing different or untoward or notably exciting happened, in bed or as we passed each other in corridors, and I gradually assumed that Laura had not read the cards or that, if she had, she had simply not understood them. By this time I was secretly rather pleased, since the entire matter had brought me to the heights of nervous tension; I am not the kind of man who makes intolerable demands. But then one day it dawned on me that she had indeed both read and understood the messages: the lack of understanding was mine. I was looking for change in the wrong place: the food had improved, enormously. It was a change—perhaps a rebuke, perhaps a surging, vital outlay of love, an exposure of Laura's most intimate self. We all give love, what of it we have to give, in our own way, and so try to serve. As for me, my sense of deep feeling unconsummated, of corners of self untouched and unexpressed, continues. I have no great expectation of ever, now, expanding my senses or my sensibility, though I sometimes feel signals in the air, vague promises. On the other hand, I have put on half a stone.

I MIGHT ADD that I now feel that the whole experience with Patient X was of the greatest professional value to me. For, if part of one's professional duty is to be the man detached, another part is to be the man in a certain sense involved, the man who is following out where consciousness is going; and if I am just slightly more competent in the latter aspect of my role because of Patient X, and if I see more clearly than I did where our culture and our history are moving us, and what they ask of us, and also what I myself am really like, and why, indeed, it may well be that what I am like is not really what anybody *ought* to be like, then perhaps we are getting somewhere. Or, at any rate, that is what Evadne Winterbottom says.

For I have, actually, seen Evadne Winterbottom a certain amount, in informal circumstances, since she ceased to be my Patient X. I gather that she has always tended to maintain this sort of relationship with some of her former advisers, dropping in on them now and again for a chat and a drink, meeting them in town, taking weekends with them, even while fresher consultants are considering the problems that are arising from just that situation. Even the young man with dyed silver-grey hair was, I gather, a lecturer in sociology at the local polytechnic. We can talk freely now, since she is not my patient (she's now going to a very well qualified man of Laingian persuasions in the next town, where they have a teaching hospital and vastly superior facilities all round); and she is in fact an intelligent, articulate girl,

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with a persuasive belief in the value of her own liberation and a perfectly carefree attitude to the troubles and dilemmas that we were familiar with, conditioned by, in the pre-pill world of our youth. We talk about her and we also talk about me. It is her theory that she is my natural complement: she claims that if she needed my solutions, I needed her problems. "The modern symbiosis," says Evadne Winterbottom; "I agree," I say. As she says, we each had our professional role to perform, mine of adviser, hers as patient: she was dependent on my theoretical abstractions, and I was dependent on her freewheeling actions. But roles wear out, become disfunctional; and, for both our sakes, a new one was needed. "You can be more than you think you are," says Evadne Winterbottom, standing in front of the mirror in the junk-shop wardrobe. "Impersonal radicalism," I say, looking at her reflected self. "We're devoted," says Evadne Winterbottom, turning round.

Actually, I have not seen her now for a couple of weeks. A young man who had his own plane, as well as a wife and seven children, and who is curiously enough a doctor, has taken her off to Malta for a bit. I met them in the Windjammer bar at the Pineapple, one evening when, after an awkward afternoon's consultation, with a twelve-year-old female arsonist, I went in for a sherry. He looked about two years older than I am, more tanned, lither, with more obvious money and more obvious brightness. He talked in a slightly hippy way, using words like "man," which I thought affected; but then, on the edge of going to Malta, one probably changes style a little. "Take me somewhere," she said. "You're with someone," I said. "He'll wait till tomorrow," said Evadne Winterbottom. We slipped round the corner to the Stagecoach bar at the Goat and Compasses. "A last consultation," she said. Then she told me all about it, her doubts, the ups and downs of her feelings; she said she doubted whether she would be back in the district again; but then, in one of her characteristic absurdities, she said that if I needed her, if things became intolerable, I was to write to her, simply saying "Come back," and she would come. "Remember that," she said. "But only if some serious emergency, of a genuinely psychic kind, occurs." What, of course, she doesn't realise is my position and my nature. I am old, more than thirty, and it is a difficult time; I am married, ten years married, and that is a dangerous period; the inclination of my character is to be recessive and not to impose my will, my needs, or my values on others. The result is a liberal ambivalence, a state torn between the claims of the past and the claims of the future, the desire for stability and solid, separate selfhood, the desire for its opposite. But this is the human condition, and for it there is no treatment. I sit here now, in the surgery, looking at the Noddy on the desk, awaiting the next case, simple bed-wetting, and write these notes. They are tentative, even muddled, and I am not sure for whom they are being written, or what they say, or ask. The place, the state of mind, the feelings, are not, I suppose, quite where I meant to end up. Somewhere, it is possible, there might have been another fulfilment, a greater self-celebration. But that is not given to most of us. Perhaps it is really and truly, for all that's said, given to none of us. With, I suppose I ought to add, the possible exception of Evadne Winterbottom.

I should like to end by hoping that this, in its way, answers the questions of those of you who have been kind enough to ring me up on the telephone, usually in the very late evening, and ask about the present historical state of man. I am, of course, at the surgery twice weekly, in the afternoons; and I am always available there, in my professional capacity, to answer queries or treat cases—to the best of my ability—such as may arise in these times of what I think we all recognise as considerable strain.

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Roy Fuller

The Planet on the Table

Shakespeare's Common Humanity

"OTHERS ABIDE OUR QUESTION." For years I completely failed to understand this opening sentence of Matthew Arnold's sonnet on Shakespeare. Of course, the poem immediately goes on to make its general situation plain:

> *Others abide our question. Thou art free.*
> *We ask and ask—Thou smilest and art still,*
> *Out-topping knowledge.*

But, I wondered, what was the question Arnold was putting to Shakespeare and other poets? A note in Kenneth Allott's masterly edition of Arnold's poems gives one answer: the note is a quotation from a book by Schiller, which I suppose Arnold may have read: "Since I was accustomed by the practice of modern poets to seek the poet in his work . . . I could not bear that the poet in Shakespeare could never be seized and would never give an account of himself." Undoubtedly this notion is partly behind Arnold's sonnet. Another note by Professor Allott provides further illumination: this is an extract from a letter from Arnold to Arthur Hugh Clough:

> Yet to *solve* the Universe as you try to do is as irritating as Tennyson's dawdling with its painted shell . . . and yet I own that to *re-construct* the Universe is not a satisfactory attempt either—I keep saying, Shakespeare, Shakespeare, you are as obscure as life is.

The secrets of personal life, the riddle of existence—perhaps these *are* the things the general reader wants poetry to reveal. They aren't, however, in my experience, the things fellow practitioners would look to find answered in a poet's work, and if this is all Arnold is putting it would seem rather a writing-down on his part, a concession to popular feeling about poetry and about Shakespeare in particular.

Oddly enough, the further—indeed, the prime—obscurity I always found in that opening sentence arose from the real interest of poets in poetry, the verbal one. "Others abide our question"—what the blazes does Arnold mean by "abide"? One sees that it's a good word in the context: the long "i" provides effective variety among the other vowel sounds of the line, and the "d" sound enables "our" to be pronounced without any awkward gap or pause for breath. But it isn't until one turns up the large Oxford Dictionary (which of course one might have done at a far earlier stage in one's uncertainty) and sees the seventeen meanings of the verb "abide" that one realises its built-in and ineradicable ambiguity. One might also, had one received an academic education, have considered the Victorian (indeed, possibly specifically Tennysonian) revival of the popularity of "abide" from its King James's Bible days.

There are several kinds of gormlessness in the reading of poetry. I think the least venal is the ignorance and carelessness of youth. My appreciation of the marvellousness of Auden's *Poems* when I bought the book soon after its publication in 1930 was scarcely impaired by the misreadings of it in which I persisted for years.

> *Sir, no man's enemy, forgiving all*
> *But will his negative inversion, be prodigal.*

How long was it before I realised (or, more likely, someone told me) that "will" was a noun not a verb, and "be prodigal" related not to the enemy but the "Sir" to whom the sonnet was addressed? Undoubtedly our instinct for the good and the useful in contemporary poetry falls off with age, as does our minute interest in it. Probably the two declinations are connected. On the other hand, our general understanding of poetry increases, it seems to me. The poetic achievements of Walter de la Mare and D. H. Lawrence (to take two poets far from the first rank) I've quite recently come to admire through

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their skill and invention; a judgment, correct as it now appears, but one I was quite incapable of making in the ancient days when I over-valued Lawrence and discounted de la Mare. For it is the skilful parts of Lawrence and the inventive parts of de la Mare that matter, and not *vice versa*. Some of our increased understanding arises from our increased experience of life, but most of it, I guess, is arrived at by more patient reading, less obsession with the *zeitgeist*, and an absorption of critical precepts.

I WANT TO SAY something about the last matter particularly. I have lived through a very great epoch of literary criticism. I read Eliot's criticism when I discovered his poetry in the late 'twenties, and then went on to I. A. Richards. Leavis I've constantly gone back to. I read Empson's *Seven Types of Ambiguity* and *Some Versions of Pastoral* more or less as they came out. In the 'fifties Donald Davie's criticism seemed even more valuable than the new, sensible poetry which it accompanied. All these writers (and a few more names could be added to them) were part of the literary creativity of their time. They illuminated the tradition of that creativity and also, by teaching us how better to read poetic texts, enabled us to write better verse.

But I've lived, too, through a notable period of what I suppose one has to call academic criticism. This hesitation over nomenclature perhaps appears strange, speaking as I do in the University Examination Schools. Here, we are, if not ruled, certainly examined by academics. Some of you are fated to become academics yourselves. Indeed, all the "creative" critics I've mentioned, except Eliot, are or were academics. At one time (and not so long ago) there was a sharp division between the academic and the creator. Some academics followed behind literary creativity at a distance that was more than respectful—positively laggardly. Moreover, the academic, trained in the technicalities of literature and of manuscripts and books, was readier to fulfil his function mainly among such technicalities. That situation has greatly altered and the reasons are plain. What was once thought of with admiration or scorn as the *avant-garde* has been working in English literature for sixty years: in fact, all significant writing may be thought of as *avant-garde*, though obviously some is more *avant* than the rest. Universities have grown so greatly that occupation in merely technical matters could hardly be found for their staffs and post-graduates. And (and perhaps this is the most telling) the example of the line of "creative" critics has fired the academic to be creative also—to interpret beyond the text, to systematise his interpretation, to import other disciplines into his critical considerations.

SO FAR as flexibility, open-mindedness and even mere extension of syllabuses into modern times are concerned, the change in the academic role might be conceived to be wholly admirable. But, alas, we know only too well that the "creative academic", if I may term him so, has begun to interpose himself between the reader and the text—the text that, when all is said and done, is the reader's only proper study. It was, I'm sure, this sense of a vast literature to be ploughed through before the real literature is reached that prompted Auden to say once (in an article in *The Observer* called "The Poet as Professor"), laying down a curriculum for what he called "a Bardic College", that "All critical writing, other than historical or textual, would be banned from the college library."

"A vast literature", yes, and one, particularly in the United States, of variable helpfulness and sensibleness. It includes a good deal of inflated rubbish about the meaning of literary works and, worse perhaps, it has tended to create a limited and unreliable hierarchy of writers (especially modern writers) claiming a reader's attention today. But even the most distinguished part of it must be used, both by readers and teachers, with extreme discrimination. In this connection I commend a book called *Shakespeare and the Students* by D. J. Enright, who is as wise and sparkling a critic as he is a poet. Enright says in his introduction (and the attitude is refreshingly manifest throughout the book's examination of four Shakespeare plays):

> In the first edition of *The Wheel of Fire*, that influential book on the interpretation of Shakespearean tragedy, G. Wilson Knight asserted that the persons, the characters of the plays, "ultimately, are not human at all, but purely symbols of a poetic vision." An unhappy consequence of this view of Shakespeare has been to make of his work an academic subject, remote from the merely "human" concerns of the student. Many students have all too swiftly taken a further tip from L. C. Knights's reference to "the necessary aloofness from a work of art", and art is then seen to be about what happened to *other* people—or better still, not to people at all, but just to symbols. Literature becomes something you are examined in at the end of the course, and you

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> remain aloof from it at least until that grim day arrives with its inhuman concerns.
>
> M. C. Bradbrook once wrote, "It is in the total situation rather than in the wrigglings of individual emotion that the tragedy lies." One sees what she meant. But too often . . . this piece of advice has been construed as an excuse for not bothering with the uncomfortably complex wrigglings of Macbeth or Antony. The necessity of what we can still call "modern" Shakespearean criticism cannot be denied. But there must be other teachers besides myself who feel that we have been rescued from the smoke and fire of romanticism only to be dropped into the hygienic incinerators of symbolism, imagery-computation, a curiously trite moralising, and philosophising of a sort so primitive as undoubtedly to have contributed to the discredit which literature has fallen into among the serious-minded.

But, as I've perhaps needlessly said, there have been great and true academic critics in my lifetime and, of course, in this very field of Shakespearean studies. The work of Dr Alice Walker comes at once to mind. Her book *Textual Problems of the First Folio* not only irradiates Shakespeare's plays: its methods and terminology, its account of the fate of a poet's words after they have left his desk, also reverberate in the imagination. The book lies behind a short poem of mine called "Versions of Love" and I would hope any reader of that would also have read Dr Walker. I for one have no objection to critical nit-picking, provided it's of the technical sort, and allied with brain-power. What a relief, particularly after some recent studies and lives of Shakespeare, both fictional and allegedly factual, to return to the daddy of them all, E. K. Chambers's two volumes of 1930, *William Shakespeare: A Study of Facts and Problems.* Perhaps it is because everything can be found in his pages (right down to the painted wall of the Tudor room in the Cornmarket) masterfully displayed, that Chambers can be so brilliantly commonsensical. Discussing the chronology of the plays, for instance, he quite casually throws out the following remarks:

> In reading Shakespeare, I feel that there is a great deal of level stress, and that in many lines there are very few strong stresses. These features may vary at different periods, but the subject still wants working out. How far the actors emphasized stress, where it was optional, we cannot say. Polonius commended the "good accent" of a highly stressed speech; but he was no judge.

Here, it seems to me, we have some valuable hints on a matter which has bedevilled Shakespearean productions ever since I went, as a boy, to see those of Sir Frank Benson and less-celebrated touring actor-managers. The measured, inclined to be hammy style of speech that Benson presumably inherited from the Victorian Shakespeareans, quickly gave way, in my early days, to a gabble that became quite a convention. The gabble may be regarded as an appropriate counterpart of the quite healthy revolution in production that by dispensing with intervals and elaborate sets enabled a rapid succession of scenes to be staged and consequently more of Shakespeare's text to be actually played. Since in the gabble a good deal of meaning was lost—a meaning that because of the changes in vocabulary and syntax, and modern incomprehension of external reference the brisk modern producer would in any case have regarded as irrecoverable audiencewise—gimmicks were introduced to restore the consequent falling off of interest. Wax comically elongated actors' noses, elderly characters were frantically palsied: the plays were set in Victorian England or the Austro-Hungarian Empire; and played in Regency muslin or modern dinner-jackets. In more recent times we have seen, in some productions, the reflection of the symbolic view of Shakespearean characterisation referred to by Enright, where the action takes place in some formalised never-never land.

THE QUESTION of how the verse should be spoken remains. I fear that the old tradition of ham has never really been sliced off. In the parody of Shakespearean productions, stemming from the comic genius of Jonathan Miller in the *Beyond the Fringe* revue at the end of the 'fifties, the satire was directed mainly against conventionalised action—mutual forearm claspings, back-clappings, and the like—but it also paid attention to both the gabbled and hammy styles of poetry-speaking. In general actors can't speak verse. The irritating singing diction, taught by the academies (presumably so as to avoid monotony of pitch) persists even in actors who escaped early or never attended the academies. The problem of keeping the rhythm but reading for sense seems, too, to be beyond them. Indeed, the business isn't easy to bring off. In general, a much slower, more thoughtful and less emotional delivery is to be recommended, with the easier effects of pathos and comedy strictly avoided.

One might interpolate here a point made by Francis Berry in his suggestive book *Poetry and the Physical Voice,* that only in his non-dramatic work, conspicuously in the sonnets, did

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Shakespeare seemingly compose for his own voice. In the plays he used the familiar voices of his fellow actors as "surrogates, or instruments." Mr Berry's lengthy discussion of the matter should be read: I would here merely add a rather different and simpler observation—that because of their complexity the sonnets would on the whole require a slow reading, with the emphasis on the words vital for sense rather than on the stresses of the verse, and that this might well be done by the poet himself, who quite soon would have forgotten, a common experience of poets, what meaning he had intended. Such required rediscovery of meaning is also implicit in a good deal of the verse of the dramas. This view chimes with Chambers's remark about level stress.

So, too, though one wouldn't want at all to go back to anything like Irving's mahogany furniture and live horses, a setting is required for the plays that doesn't positively impose non-realism. Much can be taken in the theatre by way of convention but, as A. C. Bradley realised, Shakespeare's plays (despite the symbols, the verse, the words, the staggering intellectual genius) are finally about human affairs and need a human setting. In his introduction to the Arden edition of Shakespeare's poems, F. T. Prince has a penetrating passage:

> In the language, the poetry, the poet lives one life, and in his vision of the subject he lives another. He creates the poem in a kind of double consciousness, in two concurrent lives, made possible by intense activity of mind and feeling. We who read can share this double consciousness; indeed such a detached yet intense participation in the imagined lives of beings other than ourselves is the end of all art. Try to explain it, and you initiate an explanation of human consciousness itself, with all that may be entailed.

Professor Prince was writing about Shakespeare's two narrative poems, but his words will remind us, if we need reminding, of the significance to Shakespeare and to ourselves of the characters in the plays. In the history of our literature since Shakespeare the poet's "double consciousness" has been weakened in the moiety that offers to interest us "in the imagined lives of beings other than ourselves", for that role has largely been taken over by novelists and prose dramatists. In lyrical poetry, the growingly dominant mode since the Romantic Revolution, the only fully imagined life is often that of the poet himself—with all the dangers of narrowness, self-indulgence and indeed sheer boredom that entails. But yes, in Shakespeare, as in Jane Austen and George Eliot and Dickens, we give ourselves wholly to this mysterious human trait of yielding up our intellectual and emotional concern to a set of people who never were, not necessarily in an unsophisticated way but certainly without reservations as to the convention, or degree of importance compared with "real" life, that the business involves. And when we see the plays on the stage (where they were meant for) a further process takes place, also mysterious, and of a fundamental simplicity, even crudity, which nevertheless ought to enhance (and does enhance, if the ingredients are right) the effect the poet aimed for. In the theatre the creatures of the poet's imagination are given living human form. So that we are offered to be turned up (or turned on) not merely by the fictional King Lear but by the fictional King Lear in the person, say, of Sir Donald Wolfit, with all Wolfit's traits as actor and as man, traits that will by no means meet with our uniform approval.

The process doesn't stop short before Shakespeare's late romances, sometimes thought to be supremely non-naturalistic. Prospero is often considered a dry, even wearisome figure; the magician's omnipotence not made much less inhuman by flashes of puritanism and testiness. The best Prospero I have ever seen was played by Michael Hordern, without the aid of white whiskers: a man of middle-age, experience not precluding further experience, fully-conscious humour not avoiding unwilled comic aspects of the persona—a reading quite within the text. Above all, Mr Hordern gave up as little as possible to tradition and convention the naturalism learnt in acting in plays of our own time. Of course, naturalism is itself a kind of convention—or at least it stems from rapidly changing manners. But as one always wonders why opera is still acted in a style that seems to us utterly unnaturalistic, so one must be impatient with Shakespearean productions that are not contemporary in that sense, even more now that cinema and television drama have accustomed us to what our grandfathers would have regarded as baffling under-playing. I think there has yet to be, even on the Box, a Shakespeare play presented as close to life as it is visibly and orally lived as, say, *Softly Softly*—though what might be done in this area was more than indicated by James Mactaggart's direction of *The Duchess of Malfi* on BBC2 on 10 October 1972.

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WE LYRIC POETS have filched much from Shakespeare's enormous cast. We have used him as a shorthand for worlds we failed to create ourselves. Apropos of *The Tempest*, it can be seen how superior is Auden's "The Sea and the Mirror", which uses the people of that play, to another long poem of his middle period, "The Age of Anxiety", where the protagonists are of Auden's own invention—superior, I mean, simply in the amount of depth of life we feel the characters possess. Some years ago I read in another Arden introduction, Frank Kermode's to this same play of *The Tempest*, of Shakespeare's preoccupation in "these last plays with the theme of reconciliation, and the survival into a new world of the children of those who had quarrelled." I was taken by the phrase (which meatily summarises the modern view of the plays) because being of an age myself to have seen a new generation grow to maturity I had been thinking of the subject as one for literary work. But it never for a moment struck me that the business could be brought off in a poem, and even had I been a dramatist I should have written in prose. My Leontes-Prospero figure had to be placed in a solid naturalistic setting (he is the hero of my novel *My Child, My Sister*). Though poetry in our time has succeeded in recovering the language and situations of ordinary life, it isn't capable, as literature has developed, of emulating the psychological interplay of the characters of the novel. Even where the poet assumes a mask not his own, poetry is now essentially a monologue, and possibly there is a danger (maybe this is meant when the "death" of the novel is referred to) that the novel may become a monologue, too.

One of the plates in the great work of Shakespearean research and criticism by Sir Edmund Chambers already referred to is of the bust in the monument in Stratford Church. Familiar though it is, one always gets a slight shock seeing this effigy, whether in reproduction or actuality. Perhaps this is partly due to one's even greater familiarity with reproductions of the Droeshout engraving, part of the title page to the First Folio—the image there being altogether more intellectual and refined. The Stratford monument Shakespeare is a stoutish man, the moustache curled upwards in the style of a pilot of the Second War. The eyes are prominent and outward-looking, the mouth slightly open: features of a keen observer of the exterior world (and incidentally those of one slightly apoplectic—we recall the legend of Shakespeare's death following a boozing session with Drayton and Jonson). Though the image may, as I say, surprise the romantic view of the Bard, I find it entirely convincing. As Aldous Huxley once remarked in a letter: "Fertile inventors and narrators and genre painters have all been rather burly, genial fellows." So, too, we may feel, must have been one who was able to abstract for poetry so much of life as it is lived.

ONE CAN'T REALLY regret the division of literary art into the two great rivers of poetry and fiction: each has its marvels, many arising from the very business of specialisation. But when we consider the work of a modern poet to whom we can unquestionably, I think, affix the label "great"—Wallace Stevens, and his case is not untypical—I believe that for all its bulk, skill and invention it encloses a serious lack, the lack of a detailed realism and the unfulfilment of our interest, in Professor Prince's words, "in the imagined lives of other beings." No doubt those two things must usually go together. Stevens himself may well have been conscious of an obligation not carried out: he is constantly, even in short poems, producing characters, but they are usually mere fantastic sketches. Certainly in his critical prose, in his letters (and in his poems also), he is obsessed with the relation between literature and reality. Towards the end of his life he wrote a poem that despite its brevity and comparative simplicity summed up with intense feeling his long years of poetic work. Like so many of us, it is upon Shakespeare that he calls for image and sanction. "Ariel", he begins:

Ariel was glad he had written his poems.

The last two stanzas, speaking of his poetry, provide the title of the poem:

It was not important that they should survive.
What mattered was that they should bear
Some lineament or character,

Some affluence, if only half-perceived,
In the poverty of their words,
Of the planet of which they were part.

He called the poem "The Planet on the Table", perhaps with a thought for the volume of collected Shakespeare as well as of collected Stevens, but in the modest hesitations of the poem's words we see Stevens's genuine reservations about his own work—possibly the consciousness that Shakespeare's work is not only a

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planet on the table but also a planet in the theatre among masses and many sorts of humanity.

It will have been seen that I've been merely sniffing cautiously round the circumference of the Bard. It seemed rather bad that during five years I've scarcely, so far as I recall, even uttered the name of Shakespeare. I've always wanted to add my ½p to the great heap of Shakespearean criticism but have long realised that I lacked the intellect and insight to do anything of the "creative" sort. From the academic sort my education (or, rather, absence of it) and previous occupation debarred me. (I've even been forestalled in possibly writing about Shakespeare in his conjectured years as lawyer's clerk: as to that I can only add that his forensic imagery, commendably accurate though it is, is unlikely to have come from one actually engaged in the law, for the closer one is to the technicalities of an occupation the less likely one is to use them in one's creative non-occupation.) Though once I did think I'd made a small discovery. In the opening scene of *The Merchant of Venice* where Antonio and his two fellow Venetian Rotarians are discussing the import and export business, Salario says how worried *he* would be if he had ships and merchandise at sea:

> *I should not see the sandy hour-glass run*
> *But I should think of shallows and of flats,*
> *And see my wealthy Andrew dock'd in sand.*

The word "Andrew" is in italics in the Quarto and Dr Johnson's suggestion that it was the name of a ship has been generally accepted. But (so the story continues) no contemporary ship of that name could be found until, in a letter to the *Times Literary Supplement* dated 27 December 1928, Professor Kuhl advanced the proposition that Shakespeare was referring to the Spanish ship, the *St Andrew*, captured during the Cadiz expedition of 1596 and brought to England. Kuhl's proposition received critical assent and now appears in all the notes. The point is of some importance because of the dating of the play: the news of the Cadiz expedition didn't reach the Court until 30 July 1596, and this date now forms the earliest limit for composition, the latest being 22 July 1598, the date of entry of the play in the Stationers' Register.

The uneasiness about all this felt by anyone who has been in the Royal Navy is that "the Andrew" is common Naval slang for the Royal Navy itself. Surely there must be some connection between this and the name so casually tossed out by Salario. Could the *St Andrew* have been so celebrated both that Shakespeare's reference would have been generally understood and that it should have given its name to the whole service? Unlikely. The large Oxford Dictionary provided no help. A useful volume called *The Seaman's Manual*, issued to me as part of my kit when I was called up into the Navy in 1941, said that prior to the accession of James I Scottish ships sailed under the cross of St Andrew. Though in my experience the Scots form a substantial proportion of the Navy's lower deck and are a masterful race, it seemed improbable that they had imposed their nomenclature (if indeed it was used in that way) on the combined fleets after 1603. To cut a tedious story short, I found after consulting a number of slang dictionaries (which by no means agreed) that the term "the Andrew" seems to date only from the mid-19th century. It may be rhyming slang—man of war, Andrew Millar; Millar being said to be an early contractor of fresh provisions for the Navy. Others say that the derivation is from Andrew Walker, a notorious Press Gang tough. Finally, a book by John S. Farmer called *Slang and its Analogues* dealt the deathblow to my academicism. The author's entry under "Andrew Millar, sub. (nautical)" ran as follows:

> A curious cant name for a ship of war; sometimes simply ANDREW. Its origin is quite unknown; but it has been pointed out that Antonio (sic), in the *Merchant of Venice*, speaks of one of his vessels as his "wealthy Andrew"; and it has been conjectured that in this case the ship was named after the celebrated Admiral Andrea Doria, who died in 1560. But to trace any connection between this Andrew, however general the use of the name may have become, and the Andrew Millar of modern sailors' slang, would be difficult.

Curious that this book was published nearly forty years before Professor Kuhl's epoch-making letter to the *Times Literary Supplement*!

IT MAY SEEM NIT-PICKING indeed to be trying to assign a play to one of a trio of years. But Shakespeare developed so rapidly during these years (during every year) that the matter has curiosity value at least. Besides, apart from the Andrew business, there are some (fairly inconclusive) indications putting the earliest limiting date as far back as 1594. *The Merchant of Venice* has long struck me as one of the very few plays of Shakespeare that, as the phrase goes, one wouldn't cross the road to see. This, at first blush, would incline one to put it with *King John*,

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so to speak, rather than with *Much Ado About Nothing*. But trying to pin down one's feelings about the play, one sees that there's nothing inherently boring in it. Perhaps the main trouble is the tradition of playing Shylock as a stage Jew and presenting the worthless *jeunesse dorée* of the play as wholly virtuous. A recent TV production unconsciously revealed the shallowness and self-regard of Bassanio and Co., while following the tradition. The camera's prying eye was a true critic, and perhaps some deficiencies of playing rammed the point home. One's sense is that Shakespeare had ambivalent emotions about his materials, and one would like to see a production which brought out the ambiguity by depicting Shylock as a figure not in the least *outré* (and, after all, we must feel that Shakespeare's view of the Jew, like our own liberal view of the black, though taking into account common prejudice, seeks always for the common factors between the two religions, the two races), and the young opposition for what it was, a set of rather feeble idlers dependent on Antonio's and Portia's hard cash. Not that anything morally, or even aesthetically, plain could come out of the play, any more than it can come out of *Much Ado* (one thinks of "Kill Claudio"). So one's inclination is to put it as late as possible—even giving time for the name of the ship to pass into popular usage! 1597 was a year in which the scholars don't seem to have found much going on in Shakespeare's workshop. It was the year of the purchase of New Place: the possible commuting between London and Stratford could be reflected in the Venice and Belmont scenes. The year also saw some Shakespearian litigation. 1596 was a bad year for weather: 1597 must have been better and the Belmont night is particularly salubrious. Into such dubious realms is one quickly led when attempting Shakespearian criticism! However, to pick the final nit, Kuhl in his *TLS* letter thought that the passage in question couldn't have been written before the autumn of 1597 because he believed it referred to the disastrous expedition to the Azores in that year, when the *St Andrew* was one of the ships scattered in the storm. The introduction to the Arden edition argues, with some show of evidence, for the previous year, but in any case poets aren't always as topical as journalists.

Such is the bulk of writing about Shakespeare that even the most modest *aperçu* is likely to have been anticipated. After preparing the foregoing passage about *The Merchant of Venice*, I found that W. H. Auden (in *The Dyer's Hand*) had classed the work "among Shakespeare's 'Unpleasant Plays' ", using the Shavian category. His point is that the "fairy-world of Belmont is incompatible with the historical reality of money-making Venice", and so the claim to virtuousness of Belmont and our natural attraction to it are called into question. One might add, apropos of this reminder of Shakespeare's dramatic delineation of mercantile capitalism, that the play (together perhaps with the city scenes of the plays that followed, the two parts of *Henry IV*) was the start of a road not taken by the playwright—a more or less realistic depiction of the new bourgeois society. That development was, of course, followed by some other dramatists of the period. Its mainly comic implications would very soon have ceased to be attractive to Shakespeare: besides, the political and philosophical problems involved would have been very arduous to solve in dramatic and poetical form. Like so many great writers (Tolstoy, Dickens and George Eliot come to mind) Shakespeare is inclined to set his work backward in time, avoiding issues that may prove merely topical or ephemeral. And he often makes, as do Milton and Yeats, a virtue of a world-view already eroded by intellectual speculation and economic development: the strategy, or constitutional cast of mind, certainly leads to the creation of tragedy.

> *Others abide our question. Thou art free.*
> *We ask and ask—Thou smilest and art still,*
> *Out-topping knowledge. For the loftiest hill,*
> *Who to the stars uncrowns his majesty,*
>
> *Planting his steadfast footsteps in the sea,*
> *Making the heaven of heavens his dwelling-place,*
> *Spares but the cloudy border of his base*
> *To the foiled searching of mortality.*

Dr Leavis, in *Education and the University*, thought Arnold's comparison of Shakespeare to "the loftiest hill" quite inappropriate:

> Had Arnold realised in the least what purports to be his theme, Shakespeare's greatness or inscrutability, a mountain could never have presented itself to him as a symbol for it. There is nothing remote or austerely or inhumanly exalted about Shakespeare, whose genius is awe-inspiring by the inwardness and completeness of its humanity.

Well said, we may think. Shakespeare is a difficult poet, but then all good English poets have been difficult (with a few exceptions!). The language is in favour of difficulty—we remember those seventeen instances of "abide" and such things as the comparatively limited but challenging opportunity for rhyme in English. But

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Leavis is right to remind us that Shakespeare is no mandarin, set apart, like Paul Valéry, say, by the force of his intellect and the specialisation of his interests. Caroline Spurgeon told us long ago, in her book *Shakespeare's Imagery*, that "The great bulk of Shakespeare's metaphors and similes are drawn from the simplest everyday things seen and observed." We are so often conscious, even when the persons are exalted and the affairs violent, that the plays come out of the experience of private life, an experience we all share. Even in the sparse biographical details that have come down to us we sense the psychological yeast set working awesomely by events—Shakespeare's two elder sisters, both dead in childhood before the poet himself was born; the arrival of his younger siblings; his pre-marital sexual experience as a mere youth; the birth to him of boy and girl twins and the death of the boy as a child; the death of his father; the arrival of a grand-daughter. So, too, we have a hint or two of the strange coincidences and repetitions (paralleling the puns and connections of the subconscious) that appear in every life—that his mother's maiden name was Arden; that his dead son proved to be named after the Prince of Denmark. In other words, we know enough of Shakespeare to receive from his work a sense of the common human behind it. At least we can assent to the end of Matthew Arnold's sonnet:

All pains the immortal spirit must endure,
All weakness which impairs, all griefs which bow,
Find their sole speech in that victorious brow.

Though taking Leavis's adverse comments on the poem a little farther, we may just boggle at that "sole", for other poets have quite decently rendered the pains, weaknesses and griefs referred to. In the need of the metre for a monosyllabic epithet, Arnold seems to have been seduced by alliteration into something illogical and inappropriate, as earlier on he put in "footsteps" after "steadfast", a ludicrous trope, Leavis points out, for a hill.

At the university we may learn what earlier is often obscured—that literature is a continuous, never-ending creative human process. Its neat epochs and grand monuments are made by the critics not the creators. Its works are as open to us to challenge and enjoy as anything written today. Perhaps it's slightly unfortunate that evaluation and enjoyment have to be tested within these walls. But that need not destroy the sense on the one hand of literature's abiding vitality and on the other of its creators being more or less ordinary specimens of humanity, with all humanity's frailties as well as its potential.

I think it was Enid Starkie, of still lively memory, who first conceived the notion that the occupant of the Oxford Chair of Poetry should be a practising poet, and masterfully carried the idea into practical effect. The drawbacks are obvious, frequently embarrassingly so, but at least the warts of a creator are in the Schools and at university and college societies presented to view. And perhaps the lesson is conveyed that going down eventually from here, from a life of emotional experience set among books and many other trophies of culture, into a world and an aging on the whole inimical to such things, need not mean an utter abandonment of the striving for standards, and for the better understanding of the old and the new in literature, our notable and idiosyncratic poetry in particular.

Interview

What's it like, though, being you?
The old dog growls and bristles. This is his favourite question.
Answers win prizes. Nothing interests him more.
Inspired by the pursuit of his own tail
He has written his poems to find out what he smells like,
And now here's another dog, a dog-fancying thoroughbred,
Just down from Oxford, trained to the minute,
On heat and eager to do some of his sniffing
For him, and to declare the crap remarkable.
Woof woof, the old dog says, *bow bow.*
I'll show you where I buried my gift!

Robert Nye

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George Watson

Were the Intellectuals Duped?

The 1930s Revisited

Say that a rescue-party should see fit
To do us some honour, publish our diaries,
Send home the relics—how should we thank them?
The march is what we asked for; it is ended.
C. DAY LEWIS, *Letter to W. H. Auden*

MANY NOW THINK of the literary 'thirties as an age of dupes. It is widely asserted, and even more widely assumed, that the fashionable intellectual Marxism of those days was based on an honest misapprehension of what Stalin stood for. Poets and novelists in England, France, and elsewhere, were, in the common view, easy victims of the Soviet propaganda-machine: being idealists at heart, they simply did not know that extermination had been an essential element in Soviet policy since Lenin's time; Stalin posed as a kindly Father of the People, and took them in. And then (to pursue the same conventional view to the end) they discovered with the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact of 1939 that Stalin was not kindly at all, and gave up Communism.

The myth is manifold, and by now it takes a variety of forms: that intellectuals, being skilled at duping themselves, willed themselves into believing the Soviet Union a paradise; that Englishmen, at least, and especially young Englishmen who have recently been to good schools and Oxford or Cambridge, *cannot* knowingly have supported the extermination of millions; that if they appeared to do so, in certain isolated utterances, that is merely because they did not understand the real meaning of what they were saying; that most were fellow-travellers, in any case, not Party members, and therefore not totally committed to the cause; and that (as a last-ditch argument) nobody listens, politically speaking, to such people anyway, to the creative artist all things being permitted now and forevermore.

These are enviable certainties, but the documentary evidence does not support any of them. Perhaps the problem of the Fellow-Traveller can be cleared out of the way at once. It is an historical misunderstanding to suppose that his commitment was necessarily weaker than that of the Party member—and here I speak of commitment to the Party and its leadership, and not just to the ideology of Marxism. Mr David Caute, in his recent study *The Fellow-Travellers* (1973), rightly dismisses what he calls, in this context, "the fetish of the Party card." That fetish was one of the numerous factual errors of McCarthyism, where it assumed the proportions of a noisy rhetorical refrain: "card-carrying members of the Communist Party. . . ." But the fellow-traveller need have been no less deeply committed to the cause than the Party member. I remember the novelist Howard Fast, shortly after his resignation from the American Communist Party because of the 1956 invasion of Hungary, remarking that New York fellow-travellers often called him a traitor and cut him dead, while some Party members still telephoned him to ask how he was getting on. The extremest fanatic may carry no card at all. But Mr Caute commits his own mistake or fetish in the early pages of his book, where he names "a certain reticence in their commitment" as among the characteristics of many fellow-travellers in the West. Reticence here cannot mean a disinclination to talk frankly and often; nobody ever accused our intelligentsia of that. A little later Caute calls the fellow-traveller's disillusionment with the West "less radical, less total, less uncompromising" than that of the Party member: he always retained, in this view, a partial faith in the possibility of progress under a parliamentary system. No doubt there were such people. But I do not believe this will serve as a general

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description of such intellectuals in the mid- and late 'thirties. Perhaps it is based on the easy assumption that, since such men returned to the parliamentary faith during and after the War, they can never really have given it up. I think they did give it up—totally.

I DO NOT BELIEVE in the myth of the Stalinist dupe. As myths go, it is surprising to the point of implausibility. After all, intellectuals are often in favour of violence. The hero of the New Left in the 1960s, Che Guevara, was often depicted as a man with a gun in his hand. Not all those who hung that poster on their walls, it is true, knew the gun was for use against what was then one of the few reforming parliamentary governments in Latin America. But if they had known, how many of them would have cared? Reform, after all, is the enemy of revolution, and for many intellectuals the gun confers heroism. It is an ancient Marxist precept that in politics the frivolous just talk while the serious take up arms.

> There is only one means [Marx wrote in 1848] of shortening, simplifying, concentrating the murderous death-pangs of the old society and the bloody birth-pangs of the new, only one means—revolutionary terror.

All that is clamorously reiterated in the works of the Master and echoed *ad tedium* in the public utterances of Lenin, Stalin, Castro, and Mao. To suppose that any studious observer could ever have been attracted to Communism as a doctrine without knowing about this is to fantasise in a void.

Still (as some one always says at this point), there is violence and violence, and all states use it sometimes, and everybody but the extreme pacifist supports some of it sometimes. . . . Yes, all that is true. But not everybody thinks violence heroic. And not everybody is in favour of killing people by the hundreds or thousands or millions. Only hypocrisy can smudge distinctions like these: they exist and they matter. To talk of the Communist or Fascist intellectual *believing* in violence is to use the verb in its intensive sense. It is not like a child believing in ghosts, and it is not like accepting a disagreeable necessity with decent reluctance. It is a belief proclaimed: it is almost a boast.

Above all the issue of scale is vital. No doubt there is a spectrum in heroic violence, and anyone but the pacifist can place himself somewhere along it. There is violence against oppressive (and especially totalitarian) authority, and many would be ashamed to condemn that; there is violence by an oppressed minority, somewhere in the middle of the spectrum; and there is violence by governments, such as Stalin's or Hitler's, on a mass scale, or extermination. It is with this last—with belief in extermination—that I am here concerned.

The published evidence alone demonstrates that many Western intellectuals in the age of Stalin did believe in extermination, in the sense of wanting it to happen. But the evidence needs to be sorted out.

Knowledge

COULD they have been ignorant of Soviet exterminations?

Concentration camps are, of course, older than the Soviet Union. But the first extermination camps in Russia, and perhaps in human history, were set up by a decree of Lenin in January 1918, three months after the October Revolution; in 1936 the process received a new and frightening impulse as Stalin's purge reached its climax. One recent study, Robert Conquest's *The Great Terror* (1968), estimates the total of such deaths in the USSR at between twenty and thirty millions (appendix A); that estimate, which has been contested, would put Soviet exterminations at about three times the celebrated Nazi figure of nine millions.

The Soviet process began as early as 1918, and the general brutality of the Leninist régime was noticed and reported almost at once; what is more, the existence of extermination camps in the USSR was reported in English books at least as early as 1931, before the literary vogue for Communism had begun.

Bertrand Russell visited Russia in May–June 1920, and *The Practice and Theory of Bolshevism*, a book written by one who had come to believe Communism "necessary to the world", appeared before the year was out. It called Lenin's way "rough and dangerous", and his government one of "evil men". Russell is writing here about Lenin and Trotsky, not Stalin. As for their slogan "the dictatorship of the proletariat"—

> when a Russian Communist speaks of dictatorship, he means the word literally.

It is "proletariat", Russell adds, that the Communist understands pickwickianly. Many of the

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Tsarist police are still employed at "their old work" by aristocratic Bolsheviks who remind Russell of young British public-school types; they will soon come to resemble "our own Government in India." H. G. Wells's *Russia in the Shadows,* based on a visit a few months later, is in some ways a retort to Russell, but it does not attempt to refute any of this. The Red Terror, Wells argues, was fanatical but honest: "Apart from individual atrocities it did on the whole kill for a reason and to an end." (So extensive killing is all right if it is for a reasonable end.) Russell found Lenin a cruel man; Wells found him practical and refreshing. But they are not differing about the fact of Soviet brutality itself.

In 1931 the Anti-Slavery Society in London sponsored and published a *Report on Russian Timber Camps* by Sir Alan Pim and Edward Bateson, which was extensively quoted in the same year by Katharine, Duchess of Atholl, in *The Conscription of a People,* including photographs of Soviet camps. These revelations led to a heated public campaign to boycott Russian timber. The *New Statesman* (23 January 1932) dismissed the demand as anti-Communist fever: "Our anti-Bolsheviks are once more sounding the tocsin." Phrases like "the produce of convict labour" (*Times*) or "the slave-manned forests of Russia" (*Morning Post*)—so the *New Statesman* assured its readers years before the Popular Front began—are "grotesque distortions of the truth." *The Times,* it goes on, resents "the success of the whole Five Year Plan", and its views are mere "prejudice, hypocrisy and misrepresentation."

Not even all Marxists accepted the *New Statesman*'s defence of the Soviet penal system. In the same year John Middleton Murry, arguing in *The Necessity of Communism* in favour of Marx but against Lenin, indignantly quoted the report of a recent conference of prison authorities in the Soviet Union, where a Commissar of Justice repudiated "attempts to reform class enemies" as a political error:

> Such prisoners must be used to Socialist purposes, but warders must abandon the practice of regarding them as individuals. They must be regarded collectively as an alien mass.

And Murry draws the plain conclusion. The ordinary criminal, in the Soviet system, may hope for release; but "the man who happens to hold heretical views concerning the Russian-Marxian dogma is deliberately to be treated as a mere beast of burden, worked to death, and exterminated." A year or two later Mr Malcolm Muggeridge, in *Winter in Moscow* (1934), thought the whole matter almost too old-hat to be worth mentioning. Trotsky's *History of the Russian Revolution,* he suggests in his preface, "blows the gaff as far as the Soviet régime is concerned, and should, therefore, save discerning readers the expense and weariness of an Intour." The infatuated admirers of the USSR are fed, it is true, with "bogus statistics and dreary slogans", but they also see the facts for themselves:

> I treasure as a blessed memory the spectacle of them going with radiant optimism through a famished countryside; wandering in happy bands about squalid, overcrowded towns. . . .

The editor of the *New Statesman,* Kingsley Martin, though from very different motives, shared the view that enough was already known about the Soviet system. "No one wants to know any more 'truth about Russia'", he wrote in 1932 in his preface to *Low's Russian Sketchbook.* The English market is already flooded with books about the USSR, and anyway he is on holiday. But he too does not doubt that the Soviet Union has already exterminated a political class. He visited Russia with these questions in mind:

> How far is it possible to change people's habits suddenly and by violence? Can you produce equality and abolish class feeling by wiping out the upper class and, if you can, is the price worth it?

Not everybody reads everything, admittedly. But it is surely obvious that, long before the Spanish Civil War began and before the pro-Stalinist intellectual hysteria reached its climax in 1936–8, the blunter facts of the Soviet system were freely available in English books. "The entire British intelligentsia has been to Russia this summer," wrote Kingsley Martin hyperbolically in 1932.

A MORE MONUMENTAL INSTANCE is still to come. Mr A. J. P. Taylor, in a recent footnote of characteristic acerbity, has called Sidney and Beatrice Webb's *Soviet Communism: a New Civilisation?* (1935) "the most preposterous book ever written about Soviet Russia." There, one is tempted to feel, he has forgotten Hewlett Johnson's *The Socialist Sixth of the World* (1939), which overlooked altogether the labour camps. The Webbs, by contrast, offer extensive documentation on the subject. In Chapter VII (entitled "The Liquidation of the Landlord and the Capitalist") they describe in detail the practice of "forcibly deporting kulaks and other recalcitrant peasants . . . to concentration camps or special industrial depots where they could be set to hard labour in

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return for a bare subsistence." Some reforming steps have been taken, they add, but conditions are still "inhuman", though "there is authority for saying that the prisoners were, after 1930, no longer beaten, tortured or killed." (Whose authority?) A long footnote quotes a work by an escaped prisoner, Vladimir Chernavin, called "Life in Concentration Camps in the USSR", which he repeated in his book *I Speak for the Silent* (1935). The Webbs largely defend the OGPU, without which, as they convincingly argue, there would be no Soviet state; and they praise their prisons in a section called "The Constructive Work of the OGPU." Their argument is simple. It is a capital offence in the Soviet Union to work against the government, and so it should be. "In Russia the greatest crime is that against the State." In the second edition of their book—in 1937, when the question-mark was removed from the title—a new entry on "Concentration camps" was added to the index for the greater convenience of Soviet admirers.

The Webbs were in love with efficiency. But poets could agree with them. Many of the details in Stephen Spender's *Forward from Liberalism* (1937) were avowedly based on their book. Spender quotes Article 131 of the Soviet Constitution, which condemns all who "violate public Socialist property" as "enemies of the people", and he comments:

> This law is the foundation-stone of political freedom. Above it the whole structure may be repressive, but it will be possible gradually to knock away the repressive laws and establish complete political freedom. (p. 260)

He was openly for a one-party state. Since communism was a moral system as well as a political one,

> no political party could arise in Russia which opposed the fundamental principles of communist morality. Communist democracy will protect itself from counter-revolution. (p. 261)

Spender did not mention Stalin till a few pages from the end of *Forward from Liberalism*, and then favourably. He knew of the Red Terror, though, and supported it: "If there had been no Red Terror, it is difficult to see what order would ever have grown out of the chaos of post-war Russia." Lenin had substituted the CHEKA for mass-terror—a good exchange, apparently; and if chaos followed the next war, the best chance would lie the same way, in a "ruthless force from which a new and juster order might emerge." Mistakes may have been made, Spender conceded, but in general Soviet policy had been one of "unavoidable necessity."

The Advocacy of Violence

DID intellectuals advocate violence?

The answer, again, is plainly Yes. They did not merely excuse it when it happened, they clamoured that it should. Brecht's *Die Massnahme*, first performed in Berlin in December 1930, tells of three comrades on a mission to China who kill a fourth who has endangered the cause. It is the Communist's duty, so the play concludes, to forget one's rights as an individual and to see the historic justice of murder:

> *Who are you?*
> *Sink into the dirt.*
> *Embrace the butcher, but*
> *Change the world. It needs it.*

And the three comrades are heroically unrepentant about their murder:

> *It is fearful to kill.*
> *But not only others, ourselves we will kill,*
> *If necessary.*

Hugh MacDiarmid's "First Hymn to Lenin," which first appeared in Lascelles Abercrombie's *New English Poems* in 1931 as "To Lenin", makes the same brutal point. (Perhaps rashly, I translate it unaided from the Lallans).

> *As necessary and insignificant as death*
> *With all its cruelties in the cosmos still*
> *The Cheka's horrors are in their degree,*
> *And will end sooner. What matters it whom we kill*
> *To lessen that foullest murder that deprives*
> *Most folk of real lives?*

"What matters it whom we kill?" Even the Nazis showed some discrimination in that matter. But in the world of the Marxist intellectual, even to allow oneself the private luxury of choosing one's victims may be a false delicacy. That would be to forget the "clear distinction between the necessary anarchy of thought and the essential dictatorship of action."[1] When you join you do what you are told, however nasty. Revolution is not a game, as Cecil Day Lewis put it in the same anthology, in his "Letter to a Young Revolutionary", "with both sides keeping the rules and the winner jumping the net to shake hands with the loser; not even in England." A revolutionary is a David against Goliath, and "the Communist

[1] Michael Roberts, preface to his anthology *New Country* (1933), p. 14. Roberts had been expelled from the Communist Party in the 1920s.

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Party is therefore right in its severity towards deviations." Besides, Communism was working righteously against one of the deepest of all human instincts, the desire to possess: "Even in Russia, where they know they'll get shot for it, people take the risk in order to transfer a shilling's worth of public property to a private hoard." So as early as 1933 Day Lewis knew that his adherence required breaking the ordinary moral rules, repressing deviations, and shooting people who commit petty theft.

SO MUCH FOR THE MYTH that the 'thirties poets were idealistic young men just down from Oxford who didn't know what they were getting involved in.

Only
Submit to the visiting angel, the strange new healer,

as Lewis wrote in a poem he contributed to *New Country*. That angel had a sword, and it demanded submission as the price of victory. Another contributor, Charles Madge, in "Letter to the Intelligentsia" a few pages on, a poem in praise of Lenin, makes that sword a knife; and he throws in Siberia with more than a touch of relish:

Only knife-edged nothing will devour
The deviators; clean out gone the voice
Of the seceders; Siberian their choice;
To left or right turning were expelled
Trotsky and Kamenev, leaders who rebelled.

Spender's *Trial of a Judge* (1938), a play that may owe much to Brecht, ends on a similar note of blood. The Communists proclaim their faith in these terms:

We hold the secret hub of an idea
Whose living sunlit wheel revolves in future years
outside.
As for our lives,
When they are killed they fall like seeds
Into the ground to bear the tenfold fruit
Of our purpose. . . .

And the play ends with a heroic chorus of Red prisoners and a cry from the wife of a murdered Jew:

. . . And the aerial vultures fly
Over the deserts which were cities.
Kill! Kill! Kill! Kill!

while the Red chorus whispers

We shall be free.
We shall find peace.

THE MOST CURIOUS CASE OF ALL is that of André Gide who (as the world now accepts it) returned from a visit to the Soviet Union in 1936 in a state of high-minded disillusion. That just shows how little his *Retour de l'URSS* is now read. The truth is that Gide objected to Stalin because he was not brutal enough. Stalin was a backslider from Marxism, "a divergence from the first ideal" of the Revolution. Out of a natural fear of Germany he has allowed a "progressive restoration of the family, of private property, of inheritance," in order to encourage the citizen "to feel that he has some personal possessions to defend." And so the first impulse of the Revolution has been "progressively deadened and lost" by compromise and concession. Gide is not against dictatorship, only the sort that now exists in Russia: "We were promised a proletarian dictatorship" and have been given a personal one. The epigraph to the *Retour* recounts in exquisitely literary French the Homeric story of Demeter who, disguised as a wet-nurse, placed the infant Demophoon naked on fiery embers, "in apparent cruelty, though in reality moved by great love", to turn him into a god, until the child is rescued by an indignant mother. How is it possible to read this little allegory except as a demand by Gide that the Soviet people should be returned to the flames of revolution? The child

> endures the fiery charcoal; he gathers strength from the ordeal. Something superhuman is fostered in him, strong and beyond all hope glorious.

before the revolutionary process is interrupted. Gide seems to have visited Russia a few months too soon. In fact Stalin was already stoking that fiery furnace in 1936.

The intellectuals did not merely accept violence: they liked it and asked for more. And they got more. "A tough, ruthless, wholly unscrupulous, iron-hearted youth, practising already in relentless fashion the Communist doctrine that the end justifies the means"—that is how T. C. Worsley, in his autobiography *Flannelled Fool* (1967), describes Esmond Romilly as a fourteen-year-old public-school Marxist who introduced him and others to the Communist Party; and he is describing what once attracted him. Nobody was having the wool pulled over his eyes. They venerated the Communist just because he did not cultivate delicacy or tell lies.

The Reverence of Violence

WHY did they revere violence?

George Orwell's *Inside the Whale* (1940), still the best critique of the literary Thirties, gives an answer to this question which is perhaps too

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simple to convince altogether. Orwell argued there that poets supported the idea of violence because, in their innocence, they did not know what real violence is like. Auden's poem "Spain" (Orwell remarks scornfully) could only have been written "by a person to whom murder is at most a *word*":

> *Today the deliberate increase in the chances of death,*
> *The conscious acceptance of guilt in the necessary murder. . . .*

And Orwell attacks the literary Marxists with a jibe that has since become justly famous: "So much of left-wing thought is a kind of playing with fire by people who don't even know that fire is hot." This is a very uncharacteristic passage: Orwell was not much given to the easy-out, least of all for his enemies. How does he know, in any case, that murder is only a word for left-wing intellectuals? I half-suspect him of showing off here, as he sometimes does elsewhere. He loves to present himself as the man who has been through it all himself, and he may be seeking an argumentative advantage, as an ex-policeman and ex-soldier, over the kind of writers who spent the Spanish Civil War at cocktail-parties or well behind the front.

> It so happens that I have seen the bodies of numbers of murdered men—I don't mean killed in battle, I mean murdered. Therefore I have some conception of what murder means—the terror, the hatred, the howling relatives. . . .

It would be for a biographer of Orwell to make sense of this assertion, which presumably refers to his time in Burma. At all events, Orwell does not offer any evidence for his claim that, when intellectuals advocate violence, they do not really know what they are saying. How did he know?

Probably Orwell is convinced, as an Etonian of that era might well be convinced, that that sort of person doesn't do that sort of thing. A generation that has studied the careers of Burgess, Maclean, and Philby is less likely to take this easy view. It is true that we still do not know that murder was committed, or even planned, within the circles that Orwell makes fun of. But the harsh noises that emerge, from *Massnahme* (1930) to *Trial of a Judge* (1938), do not make it unlikely. History was calling upon man for a blood-sacrifice. Until murder is done, he will feel immature.

> *Yes, why do we all, seeing a communist, feel small?*

wrote Day Lewis in an uncollected poem of 1934, "The Road These Times Must Take."[2]

> *There fall*
> *From him shadows of what he is building . . .*
> *It is the future walking to meet us all.*
> *Mark him. He is only what we are, mortal. Yet from the night*
> *Of history, where we lie dreaming still, he is wide awake . . .*
> *He is what your sons will be, the road these times must take.*

Day Lewis's party membership seems to have been confined to 1935–8. In his autobiography, *The Buried Day* (1960), which is an honest book, he deplored his early achievements as "a too quick crop, facile and superficial", but does not deny what they were. And what they were was the most cynical form that youthful idealism can take:

> *It is the logic of our times,*
> *No subject for immortal verse—*
> *That we who live by honest dreams*
> *Defend the bad against the worse*

he wrote in 1940, in the autumn of his Marxist faith. Joining the side of a Marx-personified "history", finding comradeship, marching in step—these are the publicly declared reasons why intellectuals in the 'thirties revered violence. Bertrand Russell was the first, but far from the last, to notice that the team-spirit of Socialism and of English public schools might be seen as one and the same.

Joining and Leaving

WHEN did they join and leave Communism? Not, at all events, because they discovered what it was. Nor did they claim, at that time, to have been duped. Koestler, in *The Invisible Writing* (1954), tells in impressive detail how he lost his Communist faith in a Spanish prison in 1937 and resigned from the Party in the following year—by virtue, apparently, of thinking about it at great length at the window of his cell. There he slowly came to see that reality was more complicated than he had thought. In August 1939 "the Hitler-Stalin pact destroyed the last shred of the torn illusion", but the illusion can never have been that Lenin and Stalin were men of peace. Deciding it is all more complicated than one had thought, however, is decidedly the note to strike here. The retreat from Moscow was a

[2] *Left Review* (no. 2, 1934). The phrase "feel small" is quoted by Wyndham Lewis in his novel *The Revenge for Love* (1937), where a Communist character is shown as trained in cold-bloodedness and an admirer of Machiavelli's *Prince*.

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retreat from simplicity, from the black-and-white dogma of class war. If a general answer must be made, this is the best general answer. In one's early thirties, often enough, the simpler solutions of one's twenties cease to look true or sufficient.

The arrival-date is somewhere in the very early 1930s: Louis MacNeice, in his autobiography *The Strings are False* (1965), puts his own attraction to Communism at around the time of *New Signatures* (1932). So it was not caused by the triumph of Hitler in January 1933. Middleton Murry declared himself "finally and for ever a Communist" early in 1932, though he then belonged to the I.L.P., not to the Communist Party. Art and literature, he had resolved, could only be "superficial and trivial" until revolution had happened.[3] The collapse of the Labour-Liberal Coalition in 1931, the Labour split, the international economic collapse that attended these events in 1930–32—all these are more likely to have provided an impulse to intellectual Communism than an event men utterly failed to predict: the rise and consolidation of Nazi power. The date of departure is always within the narrow limits of 1937 and 1940, and the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact of August 1939 is late in that process, and often too late to count. John Lehmann, in his autobiography *The Whispering Gallery* (1955), names the *Anschluss* (which he witnessed in the Vienna of March 1938) as his day of disillusion. Day Lewis, in the last chapter of *The Buried Day*, tells how he left Communism after a successful speech against Fascism in the Queen's Hall in 1937: "I did not, for some time yet, abandon my political beliefs," however; and even when he moved to Devon in August 1938 "I felt no antipathy yet for Communist theory, and not much for Communist practice." The Dedicatory Stanzas to Stephen Spender, written during the phoney war of 1939–40 and prefixed to his version of Virgil's *Georgics* (1940), strike a valedictory note. The poet turns his back on politics in favour of pastoral joy, inward reflection, and the delights of poetic craftsmanship:

> *Spain was a death to us, Munich a mourning.*
> *No wonder then if, like the pelican,*
> *We have turned inward for our iron ration,*
> *Tapping the vein and sole reserve of passion,*
> *Drawing from poetry's capital what we can.*

[3] J. Middleton Murry, "Communism and the Universities", *Oxford Outlook* (May 1932).

[4] Quoted by W. T. McKinnon, *Apollo's Blended Dream: a Study of the Poetry of Louis MacNeice* (Oxford University Press, 1971), pp. 31–2.

Louis MacNeice moved in the same direction at the same moment, and in a private letter of March 1940, written during the Phoney War, he apologises to a friend for sounding like Auden:

> One must keep making things which are *not oneself—e.g.* works of art, even personal relationships—which must be dry and not damp.... Because it seems high time neither to be passive to flux nor to substitute for it, Marxist-like, a mere algebra of captions.[4]

The movement from active anti-Fascism after the fall of Prague to Hitler in March 1939 may have been hastened by the realisation that the great majority of Englishmen and (worse still) an Establishment of bureaucrats and bishops had suddenly joined the side. The cosy group had ceased to be cosy. "Yes, we shall fight, but...." Day Lewis's poem goes on: don't think we're in it for the same reason as the rest of you. Spender put the best face he could on the defection, years later, in *World within World* (1951):

> Journalists sometimes complained in the Press that the anti-Fascist writers who had shown such zeal in 1936 and 1937 seemed perversely uninterested, now that the action against Hitlerism for which they had been clamouring was really taking place. But the fact was that the anti-Fascist battle had been lost. For it was a battle against totalitarian war, which could have made the war unnecessary.

But Marxists have always believed that social improvement could only be achieved at the cost of massive violence, so that Spender's argument depends on emphasising the difference between approving one war and another. A "battle against totalitarian war", whatever that means, might be different from the war of 1939–45, but it would surely have been a major war of some kind. In any case, much of the intellectual shift of view away from Communism had already begun well before the outbreak of World War in September 1939.

THE YEAR 1939 IS SURELY the most crucial of all in focusing the gradual phenomenon of a loss of faith.

In March, Prague fell to Hitler and Madrid to Franco; Catalonia had fallen weeks before; in August, Stalin and Hitler publicly concluded an alliance which privately included a partition of Poland that followed within a month. These were all events that Communists had loudly proclaimed could not and would not happen. They shook the plausibility, if not of Marxism itself, at least of the Communist Party. The Popular Front was dead. The confident literary rhetoric spilt in

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favour of the Spanish Republic in 1936–7, when its supporters passionately believed that they could not lose, must have seemed flyblown before the end of 1938. The Republic did lose—betrayed (as many believed) from within. Orwell's *Homage to Catalonia*, which appeared early in 1938, had already shown that anti-Fascism was far from the first consideration in the minds of Soviet commissars and those who worked for them. Russia was a power like other powers.

On the other hand, the literary evidence does not suggest that Marxist intellectuals ceased to be Marxist as early as 1939: only that they ceased, then or earlier, to believe in the Communist Party. Day Lewis's Dedicatory Stanzas to the *Georgics* of 1940 suggest a loss of purpose rather then a loss of dogmatic faith. Auden's contribution to the symposium *I Believe*, which first appeared in New York in August 1939, is a revision of an article that had appeared in the New York *Nation* of December 1938. If Auden made his revisions in the early months of 1939, when Spain and Czechoslovakia were falling, then the implications of Spender's account in *World within World* may have to be reconsidered. In 1937, as Spender wrote years later, Auden

> had offered his services in Spain as a stretcher bearer in an ambulance unit. Yet he returned home after a very short visit of which he never spoke. But as a result of this visit he wrote . . . "Spain".

Well, "Spain" is about "necessary murder", among other things. Auden, who was in Spain in January–March 1937, also wrote an enthusiastic article for the *New Statesman* (30 January 1937) called "Impressions of Valencia", composed on the spot:

> For a revolution is really taking place, not an odd shuffle or two in cabinet appointments. In the last six months these people have been learning what it is to inherit their own country, and once a man has tasted freedom he will not lightly give it up. . . . That is why, only eight hours away at the gates of Madrid where this wish to live has no possible alternative expression than the power to kill, General Franco has already lost two professional armies and is in the process of losing a third.

And when, two years later, Auden wrote and revised his "Morality in an Age of Change" for *I Believe*, he concluded that different political parties should be allowed to exist, but "I cannot see how a socialist country could tolerate the existence of a Fascist Party." In some ages politics should be left to the professionals:

> But ours is not such an age. It is idle to lament that the world is becoming divided into hostile ideological camps; the division is a fact. No policy of isolation is possible. Democracy, liberty, justice, and reason are being seriously threatened and, in many parts of the world, destroyed. It is the duty of every one of us, not only to ourselves but to future generations of men, to have a clear understanding of what we mean when we use these words, and to defend what we believe to be right, if necessary, at the cost of our lives. (December 1938)

Early in 1939 the last sentence is revised, but not weakened:

> . . . to defend what we believe to be right, perhaps even at the cost of our lives and those of others. (*I Believe*, p. 31)

Spender denies Auden ever had "a Communist phase"; he merely "had a firmer grasp of Marxist ideology, and more capacity to put this into good verse" than many writers who were Communists. This is now an established convention of our literary history. David Caute echoes it: "Auden was not really ever a fellow-traveller" (*The Fellow-Travellers*, p. 174). But then Caute accepts the traditional view of Gide's defection—Auden "praised Gide for telling the truth as he saw it." This argument is a house of cards, since Gide in 1936 was more of a Stalinist (as that term is now understood) than Stalin himself. If the legend of Auden's political detachment, or semi-detachment, were not so strong, it would seem natural to read more than one of his poems of the mid-'thirties as partisan tracts for the time. Consider this from *Look, Stranger!* (1936):

> *Those who in every county town*
> *For centuries have done you down,*
> *But you shall see them tumble down,*
> *Both horse and rider.*

Is it not merely over-ingenious to doubt that any reader of 1936 would read this poem, "Brothers who when the sirens roar", as a plain call for a worker-revolution? That does not make the poet the member of any political party. But it does not make him a neutral or detached figure either. The conventional view, however, is readily accepted by Professor Monroe K. Spears in *The Poetry of Auden* (1963), who sees these interests in the 'thirties as only the mildest and briefest of flirtations: "They [the poets] were, of course, ignorant of what was really going on in Russia. . . . But when they encountered Communist methods in Spain they were shocked." If Auden was shocked by what he saw in Spain in 1937, he signally failed to say so: indeed he publicly said the reverse. I believe Spears's version of these events (which is designed to make an impressive case for the late, conservative Auden he admires) is comfortable rather than true. Much of it is

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based on Spender's *World within World* and on an Auden article written as late as 1955, in *Griffin,* where the poet offered a belated retrospect of his early views:

> Looking back, it seems to me that the interest in Marx taken by myself and my friends . . . was more psychological than political; we were interested in Marx in the same way that we were interested in Freud, as a technique of unmasking middle class ideologies, not with the intention of repudiating our class, but with the hope of becoming better bourgeois.

The world of the "hostile ideological camps" of 1938–9, where a man has a moral duty to choose one or the other, has been efficiently suppressed by 1955. I see no reason to doubt the honesty of either view. But it would be a mistake to let men write their own intellectual histories without verifying them by the historian's recourse to documents. The evidence is that all the poets mentioned here were political activists in the years 1936–8, and that they publicly urged the same duty upon others. The myth of poetic detachment will not wash.

Sincerity

"SINCERITY" is deliberately ambiguous here. Marxist intellectuals in the 'thirties were plainly sincere, in the sense of being direct and outspoken, in their demand for the "necessary" violence of communist revolution. But violence is sincere in that age and more recently still in another sense of the word, in a sense that Professor Lionel Trilling (to judge from his recent book *Sincerity and Authenticity*) might prefer to call "authentic." Violence makes a man real. Before he has committed it he does not altogether exist or believe. Just as some Christians have held that a man should be ready to die for his faith, so the Marxist believes a man must be ready to kill for it. Then he becomes himself. The urbane world he lives in is unmasked, in its violent reaction to his deed, for what it really is; and he himself has made his sacrifice of blood. The political murderer cannot return; the deed is irrevocable. He must hunt or be hunted to the bitter end. Douglas Hyde, writing as an ex-Communist in *I Believed* (1950), tells how at the age of sixteen he had heard from leftists of a "bomb-shop" in Bristol, and "felt let down and somewhat frustrated" to discover that the bombs were only books. He lovingly learnt by heart Vanzetti's words on hearing his death-sentence: "I might have lived out my life talking at street-corners to scorning men. . . . Now we are not a failure."

The steps to climb towards this ultimate conviction, with its climax in the years 1936–8, were largely built for British intellectuals long before the Spanish Civil War began. They were there in the early years of the century, in the writings of such Victorian survivors as Bernard Shaw and H. G. Wells. The steps can be listed in formal order.

1. *Liberalism is dead,* as an historic fact. It has given place to class war. And since Marx predicted class war, he may be right about other matters too. The future is all socialist, in this view; and even for non-Communists Marxism provides "the intellectual framework of socialist thought," as A. L. Rowse put it in his *Politics and the Younger Generation* (1931). Liberalism will die because politics "are moving towards a clearer division between the possessing and the working classes." "We are seeing the end of Liberal Democracy," wrote Auden in *New Era* (January 1939), and this is "a good thing": it will be replaced by socialism or fascism. There are only two sides, from this moment in history, and he who is not for us is against us. This is how Kingsley Martin justified his rejection of Orwell's articles attacking the Communist role in the Spanish Republic in 1937; and it helps to explain why *Homage to Catalonia,* in the following year, was so coolly received by the *New Statesman* reviewer, V. S. Pritchett (30 April 1938). Orwell's liberal-anarchist defence of the POUM is "wrong-headed" and "perverse", given that Soviet support in Spain is indispensable, and Orwell is just "kicking against the pricks." Choose or be damned.

2. *Communism was fashion,* and there are always those who would rather be Red than dead, in the fashionable sense of the term. That state of mind must be commoner than public admission would suggest. Some men choose politics as women choose hats. Russia in politics (as Mr Michael Ayrton has confessed recently about his adolescence in the 'thirties) meant what Picasso meant in art: "Both, we believed, were bastions of the *avant-garde,* to be accepted and supported regardless."[5] Regardless of pretty much anything at all, for some. The admission is frank enough to be creditable.

[5] Michael Ayrton, from a letter to Kingsley Martin of December 1966, quoted in C. H. Rolph, *Kingsley* (1973), pp. 208–9.

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3. *Communism will make a man of you.* It is not just (as Louis MacNeice confessed years later, in *The Strings are False*) that most of us have a violent streak that seeks its own justification ("I wanted to smash the aquarium"). It is more like the deliberate suppression of adolescence in an act of obedience, "embracing the butcher" (Brecht's *Umarme den Schlächter*). "The strong appeal of the Communist Party," MacNeice wrote, "was that it demanded sacrifice; you had to sink your ego." And the deeper it sank, the better.

4. *Communism gets things done.* While gradualists talk, Stalin is creating something. He goes the whole hog. "Much better be ruled by Stalin," wrote G. D. H. Cole during the War, in his *Russia and the Future* (1942), "than by a pack of half-witted and half-hearted Social-democrats." Violence happens under socialism, but in a cause that counts, and omelettes are made only of broken eggs. "Let us see this matter in perspective," the *New Statesman* wrote of the Moscow purges (5 September 1936): "A social revolution is accompanied both by violence and by idealism. Its success must be judged primarily by the permanent achievement of its economic aims." By the mid-'thirties this is the essence of the Popular Front case for accepting Stalin's leadership. The omelette argument could be applied retrospectively to all history, and not just to the present moment. "When I read about Ivan the Terrible," said Dr Edith Summerskill in December 1935 (addressing a Congress of Peace and Friendship with the USSR after a six-weeks' visit to the Soviet Union):

> I was not so impressed by the fact that Ivan used to gouge out people's eyes but that he imported four German doctors into Russia. I also remember Peter the Great, and again the fact that he built Leningrad at the expense of millions of lives did not impress me so much as the fact that he introduced medicine into Russia.[6]

Millions of lives have ceased to matter much, by now. "The world will likewise mark the admission," wrote Louis Fischer slyly in a *New Statesman* review of the Webbs' *Soviet Communism* (7 December 1935), "by the Fabian Father, that the end justifies the costs—and the means?" The Webbs, he had noticed with delight, had already accepted the Stalinist means.

5. *The individual no longer exists.* It is party obedience that matters. More than one Communist, in the 'thirties, echoes with new enthusiasm Bertrand Russell's forebodings about the blend of Marxism with the team-spirit of our British public schools. Mr Maurice Dobb, after several visits to the Soviet Union, commended the "tradition and discipline" of the Party as seen in government. "A new race of men," he wrote warmly in his *Russia To-day and To-morrow* (1930), "disciplined by the machine and by labour, sometimes crude and always ruthless, but having vision and devotion. . . ." To achieve such power, total subservience is demanded of the faithful. A revolutionary, as Christopher Caudwell explained,

> must be a member of the revolutionary party. He must participate in its problems and help to form its tactics. He must execute the plans it has formed and which he had helped to form. He must cooperate in settling, and then accept and implement, the party line.[7]

This is not a matter for equivocation. The individual loses himself in obedience, as an act of faith, and performs any act that is required of him.

6. *Violence is naïve, simple, authentic.* Often, as one reads the literature of the 'thirties, one is reminded of Wordsworth, granting only that the Worker has by now imaginatively replaced the romantic wayfarer, peasant or child. Gide noted in his journal (March 1935) how for many a bourgeois like himself, who had never had to work for a living, it was impossible not to feel inferior in the presence of "a simple workman." The bourgeois feels small. Orwell, who was all the better at exposing this romanticism because he was, in some sense, himself a victim of it, put it all unforgettably in the opening paragraphs of *Homage to Catalonia*, describing a young Italian volunteer to the Spanish Republic:

> Something in his face deeply moved me. It was the face of a man who would commit murder and throw away his life for a friend. . . . There were both candour and ferocity in it; also the pathetic reverence that illiterate people have for their supposed superiors.

The romantic phenomenon the French call *ouvrièrisme* has no equivalent term in English. It is among the deepest of emotions in the 'thirties. Isherwood, a few years before, had seen the same vision in the Berlin of 1931, at a Communist meeting, and in *Mr. Norris Changes Trains* (1935) he describes the excitement he took from the faces of a German worker-audience:

> They were listening to their own collective voice. At intervals they applauded it, with sudden, spon-

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[6] *Britain and the Soviets: Congress of Peace and Friendship with the USSR, 1935* (1936), p. 151.

[7] *Romance and Realism* (Princeton, 1970), pp. 134–5, from a manuscript written in 1935–6.

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taneous violence. Their passion, their strength of purpose elated me. I stood outside it. One day, perhaps, I should be with it, but never of it.

7. *Marxism means violence.* Extermination seemed to the 'thirties plainly required by Marxist doctrine. It is not just something you will do if it proves necessary. You know it will prove necessary. The bourgeoisie, during and after the Revolution, will have to be eliminated. Some may be successfully re-educated; some may prove genuine revolutionaries themselves. But the fate of the millions who would remain was not really in doubt. The literature of the 'thirties can be outspoken about this, unlike Marxist apologetics of the last twenty years. Bernard Shaw prepared a speech called "The Terrible Responsibility" soon after the October Revolution, and his notes run:

> *(1) Killing; (2) Inculcating the State morality in schools; signing death warrants; ordering troops to fire—a Socialist government will have to do both.*[8]

The orthodox Marxist position of the 'thirties is that the ruling class will inevitably start violence—Franco's invasion of Spain in 1936 seemed to them a classic example of that principle; the workers will reply, answering violence with violence, and destroy their class enemies. John Strachey, in *The Theory and Practice of Socialism* (1936), accepted that the coming eradication of the middle class can only be violent:

> We predict that, unfortunately, the process of that abolition will be accompanied by the same violence which today characterizes all the major activities of human life.

History demands it:

> The historical record declares that no great change in the way of life of human communities has hitherto been achieved without the pains and travails of a birth process. Force, said Marx in a famous phrase, has long been the midwife of every old society pregnant with the new.

[8] These notes are reproduced in manuscript facsimile in Allan Chappelow, *Shaw: "the Chucker-out"* (1969), p. 233.

The death-warrant of a class has been made out, and it will be executed: this is the open warning of the age. In Brecht's *Die Massnahme* (1930), when the Communist agitators ask the Controller whether they were right to murder an unreliable comrade, the answer is to more questions than to that alone:

> *When they meet us, wherever it be,*
> *Let them know: the rulers*
> *Shall be exterminated.*

The Savage God

THE STALINIST INTELLECTUALS of the 'thirties are nowadays something of a joke. The "Red 'Thirties", as somebody remarked, gave place to the red-faced 'Fifties; and the short-lived Marxist revival of the 'Sixties, deeply impressed as it was with its own myth of uniqueness, left the whole question of what a former generation had believed carefully unexplored. I re-open it here as a question of history, and of nothing else. Whoever may have chanced to survive, the age itself is forever dead and gone. My own judgment, as a literary historian, is of documents rather than of men, with what the books and periodicals say.

But the literary evidence does not bear out the myth of innocence and deception. It plainly suggests that poets and novelists in that age were attracted to the most violent system on earth because it was just that. The Soviet dictatorship looked to them like a highly disciplined system that could, and should, conquer the world: the God that Failed was a savage god. Between 1933 and 1939 many (and perhaps most) British intellectuals under the age of fifty, and a good many in other Western lands, knowingly supported the greatest act of mass-murder in human history. Even the accusing eye of the historian is bound to flicker in the bright light of that assertion.

One could wish that the evidence were not as overwhelming as it is.

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Sir Karl Popper

Knowledge as an Institution—By ANTHONY QUINTON

SIR KARL POPPER must surely be acknowledged—now that Russell, Moore and Wittgenstein, the three great influences of the century so far, are dead—as the most important and interesting of living British philosophers. The only matter for controversy here is the adjective "British", since Popper's *Logik der Forschung*, in which the comprehensive set of original ideas he has ever since been exploring and developing were first formulated, was written and published in the mid-1930s, when he was still an Austrian and living in Vienna. But that powerful work has been much more read in its English dress as *The Logic of Scientific Discovery*, and all his subsequent writings have been published in English: *The Open Society* and *The Poverty of Historicism* while he was teaching in New Zealand; his two rich essay-collections, *Conjectures and Refutations;* and now *Objective Knowledge*[1] while he was at (or just in retirement from) the London School of Economics.

There are two features of his work and influence which distinguish him from the other leading philosophers of his time. The first is the way in which his ideas have been taken up, applied and endorsed by major figures in other disciplines. The art historian E. H. Gombrich and the biologists Sir Peter Medawar and Sir John Eccles are not merely cultivated men, working in other fields, who have found Popper's philosophy interesting and suggestive; they would not, I think, object to being described as practising Popperians.

Secondly, there is the remarkable width of the areas of subject-matter in which Popper's ideas have found fruitful application. He has himself written about the philosophy of science, natural and social, the philosophy of history, the theory of knowledge in general, political theory, the philosophy of language and logical theory. His pupils and followers have gone further afield: Lakatos into the philosophy of mathematics, Agassi into the history of science, Jarvie into the philosophy of anthropology, Bartley (who should perhaps be described as an ex-follower) into the philosophy of religion. Watkins and the highly independent and idiosyncratic Feyerabend have gone further into Popper's own primary domains of politics and history and of the methods of science respectively.

But despite the wealth and power of his ideas his reputation has been slow in reaching an appropriate height. There are two reasons for this: the first circumstantial, the second more fundamental. He first came to the notice of the English-speaking philosophical world in the mid-1930s with publication of his *Logik der Forschung* in a series of books by members of the Vienna Circle: Schlick, Carnap, Neurath, their Berlin associate Reichenbach, all contributing items to it. It was natural that he should have been taken to be much more one of them than he actually was. That impression could only have been strengthened by the favourable view of many of his ideas taken by Carnap, the best-known and most productive member of the Circle.

THE INITIAL DOCTRINE of the *Logik der Forschung* is that the propositions of science are demarcated from those of metaphysics by their empirical falsifiability. Now, a leading preoccupation of the Vienna Circle (and the part of their work that at this early stage was most closely followed in the English-speaking world) was their attempt to formulate a counterpart principle of verifiability to distinguish scientific sense from what they regarded as metaphysical nonsense. But Popper's difference with the Vienna Circle was more fundamental than that of how the solution

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[1] *Objective Knowledge: An Evolutionary Approach.* By KARL R. POPPER. Clarendon Press: Oxford University Press, £4.50.

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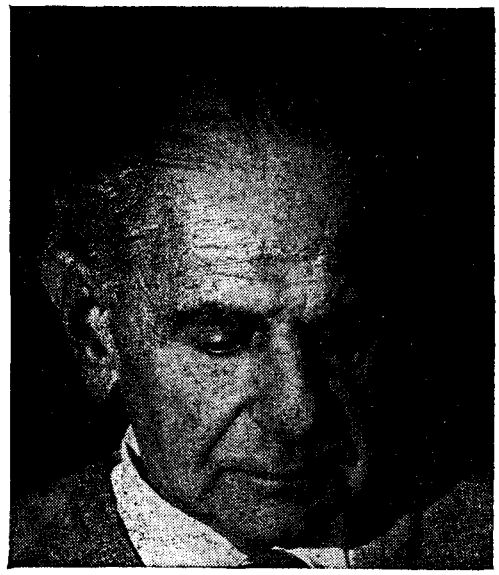
to a given problem should be formulated. He was offering a solution to a different, even if not unrelated, problem. For him metaphysics was non-science, but it was not non-sense. In view of the rigid insistence by critics and commentators that Popper's doctrine of falsifiability is a new formulation of the positivist criterion of meaning, a measure of exasperation on his part—of somewhat egocentric emphasis on what precisely he has said and meant—becomes understandable. It is as if the only review received by a passionately serious play had been one in the *Tailor and Cutter* which concerned itself exclusively with the style of the actor's suits.

A FAVOURITE ARGUMENT against Popper has turned on the consequence of his falsifiability doctrine, one that he quite explicitly drew from it, that unrestricted existential statements of the form "there exists at some unspecified place and time a thing of a certain kind" are metaphysical because they cannot be falsified conclusively. But, said Popper's critics, such statements are plainly significant, so his doctrine is false. He, however, had never held them to be meaningless. His view was that they could not be regarded as scientific in the way that restricted existential statements about the existence of things of certain kinds at specified places and times —the vital falsifiers of scientific hypotheses—are.



This misinterpretation might not have been very important in itself if it had not diverted attention from what Popper saw as the really crucial part of his work, to which his falsifiability criterion of demarcation is only a preliminary: his account of the growth of scientific knowledge. There are two sides to it—one factual or genetic, the other logically evaluative or justificatory. Science in fact grows (according to Popper) not by the mechanical induction of general propositions from accumulated reports of particular observations but by the imaginative formulation of hypotheses which are then tested and, unless they elude all efforts to falsify them, revised or replaced. On the side of justification, hypotheses are made rationally acceptable not by the accumulation of positively confirming instances but by their successful survival of the most pertinacious attempts to find falsifying ones. In the first chapter of *Objective Knowledge* this theory is given a careful and finally authoritative expression, under the bold title of "Conjectural knowledge: my solution of the problem of induction." Its two sides are clearly distinguished but interestingly connected by a "principle of transference" which states that what is true in logic is true in psychology (in the case in hand, that theory is prior to observation).

The genetic or psychological side of Popper's view about induction is now widely accepted; the logically evaluative side is less so. Everyone would agree with Popper (and David Hume) that no amount of positive confirmation of a hypothesis *entails* its truth. There is less agreement with them that positive confirmation adds nothing to the *probability* of its truth. Popper's argument for this much stronger conclusion rests on a disputable interpretation of the concept of probability. He says that positive instances confer no probability on the relevant hypotheses "in the sense of the calculus of probability." But there is no such sense. The calculus of probability concerns the logical relations of probability-judgments to each other. For example, if the states of affairs described by p and q are independent of each other, the probability of both p and q being true is equal to the probability of p multiplied by the probability of q. It does not determine what the logical relations are between judgments of probability and the categorical statements of fact on which they must depend for their acceptability.

Popper argues that since Hume is right about induction—since positive instances neither entail nor make probable the corresponding hypotheses —the traditional problem of induction is insoluble. What he offers instead are criteria for rational preference between competing hypotheses. One hypothesis is better than another if (*a*) it has not been falsified while the other has been; or (*b*) it has more content, and is thus more falsifiable, than the other. Comparison in respect (*b*) is, he admits, only possible within narrow limits. The question that is not raised is whether any hypothesis is rationally preferable

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to accepting no hypothesis at all and thus to forming no expectations whatever: the position of the radical sceptic about induction.

THE JUSTIFICATORY COMFORT Popper offers is, then, pretty cool. What lies behind it is a particularly vigorous response to Einstein's refutation of Newton. For over two hundred years the marvellously articulated splendour of Newton's achievement had encouraged the assumption that the findings of developed physical science are unshakably certain. The 1919 expedition to the southern hemisphere verified Einstein's prediction about light from stars in line with the sun but refuted Newton's. Philosophers of science have inclined to see this as involving no more than a marginal revision of classical physics. Newton was nearly—rather than absolutely—right. But Popper is surely correct in emphasising the vast difference at the level of theory between the two systems of celestial mechanics. The conclusion he draws is that science is essentially tentative and always open to revision. As he neatly observes, there is something self-refuting about the belief in induction. The picture of the world provided by science is one in the light of which the fact of successful scientific prediction is highly improbable.

IN THE YEARS SINCE the *Logik der Forschung*, Popper has derived a large body of further consequences from his falsificationist theory of scientific knowledge. He has applied it memorably in new fields (most notably in his refutation of the historicist doctrine of universal laws of historical development); and he has added new refinements such as his theory of verisimilitude or truth-likeness. In *Objective Knowledge* a much larger forward step is taken with his theory of "objective mind" or "world 3". It is this, implicitly present in his earlier work, that constitutes the more fundamental and less circumstantial reason that I mentioned earlier for the surprisingly small amount of attention that his ideas (apart from a misrepresented account of his criterion of demarcation) have received from philosophers at large.

Russell, Moore, and the long line of analytic philosophers that derives from them, have all, in his view, approached their philosophical investigation of knowledge with a Cartesian or subjectivist presupposition about what kind of thing knowledge is. They took it to be a mental state of particular individuals. He maintains that although knowledge is, in general, the product of the mental activities of individuals (although books of logarithms can be produced by computers), knowledge proper is the thing produced and not the psychological incidents that accompany its production or use. Knowledge and language too are objective structures produced by men in interaction with their environment which have effects of the utmost importance on both the men and the environment: evolutionary devices analogous to birds' nests and spiders' webs.

Negatively, this objectivist conception of knowledge involves a criticism of what Popper calls the common-sense theory that knowledge is based on infallible items of given, empirical information supplied by the senses. This is the topic of his long second essay in which he distinguishes it from common-sense realism, the view that there exists a physical world independent of anyone's mental states; he accepts this although he holds it to be metaphysical and unprovable. Crucial to his rejection of the Cartesian adoption of immediacy (or directness) as the criterion of truth is his claim that the senses are, as evolved organs, "theory-laden" in the sense that they react to stimuli with in-built propensities of expectation.

A theorist of subjective knowledge might reply that the cognitive defect he ascribes to the senses has always been a first principle of subjectivism. It does not follow from the fact that our senses are imperfect recorders of the external world which sets them in operation that we do not have infallible knowledge of the subjective end-point of those operations.

THERE IS MORE TO QUESTION on the positive side of his new theory. In distinguishing world 3 of objective mind from world 1 (the order of physical things and events) and world 2 (the order of minds and their subjective states)[2] he invokes the names of Plato, Bolzano, and Frege as anticipators of his position. Now what they believed to exist, over and above material things and mental states, was a timeless order of logical essences or abstractions, of universals and propositions that were somehow there whether any actual mind ever conceived or asserted them or not. On the other hand, he remits to world 3 the books and papers of which libraries are composed. But these, it would seem, are not timeless abstractions but concrete denizens of physical world 1 as are the supposedly analogous birds' nests and spiders' webs. In other words the qualifications for admission to world 3 are radically unclear. The things he puts in it are in some cases Platonic, that is things that could possibly be thought even if no one ever does think

[2] The text was published in ENCOUNTER (April 1973), "Indeterminism Is Not Enough." See also Karl Popper "On Reason and the Open Society", in ENCOUNTER, May 1972.

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them, and in others Hegelian, things that someone has thought and expressed. This unclarity is particularly evident in what he says about mathematics. The natural numbers are, he insists, man-made (birds' nests again). But things like the infinitude of the prime numbers (and, no doubt, analogous things not yet discovered) are objectively, factually there as unintended, unexpected, but irresistible results of our construction of the natural numbers.

THIS AMBIGUITY of abstract thinkables and actual thinkings reappears in the general account Popper gives of objective knowledge as at once man-made and yet largely autonomous. What is man-made is physically realised expressions or registrations of knowledge. What is autonomous is the logically related structure of abstract essences. Again, he says that while the mental states of world 2 stand in causal relations to one another, the "objective thought-contents" that make up world 3 stand in logical relations (pp. 298–9). But he also maintains that world 3—now conceived in a non-Platonic, non-abstract way as publicly accessible embodiments of knowledge—exercises a causal influence on the mental states of world 2 and through it, by way of technology, on physical world 1.

I conclude, then, that as so far expounded Popper's world 3 of objective knowledge is a logical hybrid, a kind of philosophical mule, troublesome and infertile. But I am also sure that there is an important idea in it, that of public or common knowledge, provided that this is conceived as knowledge that is man-made, concretely embodied, and of such a character as to undergo evolution. This needs to be separated from the Platonic element of Popper's actual presentation of his doctrine: separated, that is, from the notion of an existing order of timeless, abstract essences, accessible to some kind of intellectual intuition, but prior to and massively transcendent of all actual human thinking.

I should hold that objective knowledge thus conceived is reducible to actual items of human thinking (world 2) and to the physical embodiments thereof (world 1). But that does not imply that it is somehow not real. Objective knowledge in this sense is just one more social institution, and Popper has himself argued for "methodological individualism", the view that institutions are reducible to the individual people that compose them or to their acts and states. Yet he would agree that men are made what they are to a great extent by the institutions of which they are members.

WHAT IS MOST VALUABLE in Popper's recent doctrine of objective knowledge arises from Darwin's evolutionary theory, just as his original philosophy of science derives from Einstein's revolutionary advance on Newton. Darwin's discoveries had a number of large effects in areas of thought outside biology. They strongly suggested that man is a part of nature. They explained the phenomena of natural adaptation without recourse to the theological hypothesis of an intelligent Designer of the universe. They encouraged a large variety of more or less fierce social theories, hostile to the idea that the community should encumber itself with the support of its weaker members. But perhaps their deepest implication was epistemological: that human knowledge is an evolutionary product, in a state of constant change, by which men adapt themselves to their environment. This idea is intimated in Marx's views about *praxis*. It became explicit in the philosophy of the pragmatists, especially that of Peirce, from whom (by way of Ramsey) it penetrated to a small but discernible extent into the later philosophy of Wittgenstein. This evolutionary view of knowledge—which completes Popper's long insistence on the fallible and tentative character of what we call scientific knowledge—is squarely opposed to the Platonic intellectualism or essentialism with which Popper, rather incongruously, combines it.

POPPER'S THEORIES are always interesting and original and rich with potentialities of further application. Their originality, it seems, has ironically deprived them of what they themselves assert that every theory must have to be strong and worthy of acceptance: penetrating criticism based on a serious understanding of what they actually are. Popper's contemporaries have too often mangled selected bits of his thought so as to fit them in with their own preoccupations.

A conspicuous virtue of his work is the undeviating clarity and definiteness of the language in which it is expressed. Popper, conformably with his view of language as an instrument, is hostile to concern with the precise meaning of words. Yet he has a moral passion for rational intelligibility. In his view it is to be sought by simplicity of statement, by readiness to re-express a thought in different words, by explicitness and avoidance of the oracular and the allusive. This commitment to limpidity and openness of expression is something he has most effectively communicated to his pupils and followers, and to none of them more than to Bryan Magee, whose *Popper* is a recent edition to the Fontana series of Modern Masters.[3]

[3] *Popper*. By BRYAN MAGEE. Fontana/Collins, 40p.

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Magee has done an admirable job of work. He supplies a complete and balanced picture of Popper's thought from its first beginnings up to its latest developments, brings out the interconnections between its very various parts, and explains the special excitement readers of Popper get from the sense he communicates that his ideas bear significantly on all sorts of matters outside professional philosophy proper.

If he presents Popper's philosophy as a rather isolated thing, only tangentially related to the main current of the philosophical thinking of the age, this is because (for the reasons I have mentioned) that is too much the way it has been. Since there is no body of informed and serious criticism of Popper's thought to draw upon, the book may seem a bit uncritical. Some of the small amount of serious criticism that there is is too easily dismissed. The only real objection Magee makes to Popper's views is to his negative conception of the functions of government. Popper's liberalism allows government to intervene in the life of its citizens, but only to diminish suffering and remove evils. Magee, as a social democrat, would wish to charge it with the positive augmentation of the quality of life.

In a work of this size, directed to the general reader, it is natural that the more technical aspects of Popper's philosophy should be largely passed over. But rather too little is said about probability. The vital thesis that favourable singular instances not only do not entail but do not confer any probability on hypotheses is dealt with in a single sentence. Nevertheless this is an absolutely faithful account of Popper's ideas, presented in delightfully crystalline prose, and it fully justifies the inclusion of its subject in the ranks of modern masters.

The potters of the T'ang

They need no words for, if they wish
To utter forms that burn for birth,
They throw, fire, cool their pots,
And meet
In silence when with bows,
With hands outstretched
That deprecate their own or show
Their pleasure at another's work,
They offer and accept their gifts,
Then sit to contemplate
The language of the rounded shape,
The grammar of its line, the vowels
Of glaze in phrase of craquelure,
So that the tacit meaning acts
Upon their minds,
Contracts to specks of black,
Collapsars that engulf all seeing
In eating up the space around,
Or hints in sheaves of light
At nebulae beyond the glimpse
Of other shapes they half-suggest,
A range of mountain tops
Or branches hooped with weight of snow.

William Anderson

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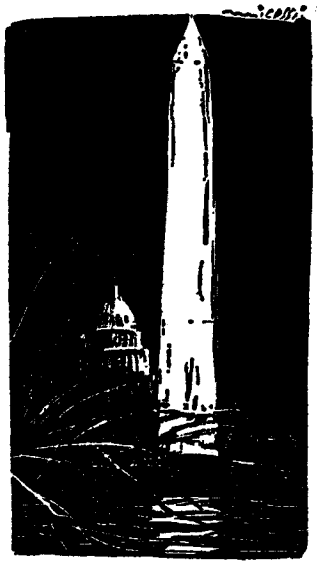
AMERICAN CHRONICLE

The Great Myth

By Marcus Cunliffe



AMERICA—meaning either the whole hemisphere or the United States—has always had a mythical element. Europeans and Americans themselves have theorised about it, and tried to compel the facts to fit the theory. There are a number of good books that explore this abstract, fantasising aspect. One of them is *The Invention of America* (1961) by the Mexican scholar Edmundo O'Gorman. O'Gorman shows how European cosmographers had arranged the world into a neat trinity of continents: Europe, Africa, Asia. There was no room for a fourth continent in their thinking. To his dying day Columbus believed his voyages had taken him to Asia. In other words, the crucial development was not the physical *discovery* of the New World but the intellectual *invention* of a cosmology to accommodate it. Another book of great verve and sweep, Howard Mumford Jones's *O Strange New World* (1964), carries the story of attitudes to America from Columbus into the 19th century.

Antonello Gerbi was among the first to enter this realm of cultural scholarship, though O'Gorman and others were also active. But Gerbi's *La disputa del Nuovo Mondo* was recognised as a classic when it appeared in 1955. Dr Gerbi returned to his native Italy in 1948 after spending ten years in Peru. He had amassed a prodigious amount of material, drawn from several languages and disciplines. However, since it was written in Italian *La disputa del Nuovo Mondo* remained unfamiliar to most of his potential audience. He has added passages and citations to this new edition.[1] The result, an excellent piece of fluent translation, is formidably erudite: 2500 footnotes, 40 pages of crowded bibliography, an immense range of reference. It is also a delight, for Dr Gerbi is an acute and witty polymath. It is a fundamentally serious book yet full of hilarious stuff: a work of finely reasoned scholarship devoted to 250 years-worth of bad reasoning and bad scholarship.

THE SEQUENCE BEGINS in the mid-18th century with the attempts of the Comte de Buffon and Cornelius de Pauw to classify and account for American fauna and flora.

The American continent as they understood it was deficient in many of the species to be found elsewhere. Where was the elephant, the giraffe, the camel, the hippopotamus, the lion, the horse? American animals, they insisted, were smaller and altogether inferior. The puma was a poor substitute for the lion, or the llama for the camel. American birds did not sing so sweetly as in the Old World. The *philosophes* were inclined to blame the climate; America in their view was abominably hot and humid. Only insects, and those disagreeable ones, could flourish in such an atmosphere. Men, too, suffered from the American blight. The aborigines did not grow much hair, were sexually feeble, and did not live to old age. Moreover, the New World's miasma affected white settlement. Breeds of cattle and sheep imported into America fared badly. Their white owners grew less and less robust.

Dr Gerbi argues that subsequent commentators took their cue from Buffon and de Pauw. By degrees they abandoned the notion that the American environment was unpleasant—at any rate so far as North America was concerned. "An ugly race in a sublime country" became the standard assessment. True, it raised a question: if the land were not noxious how could the inhabitants be obnoxious?

Sometimes travellers, philosophers, and literati —Kant, Hegel, Thomas Moore, Mrs Trollope and her son Anthony, Stendhal and his contemporary Victor Jacquemont, Schlegel, Schopenhauer, Captain Marryat, Charles Dickens—ignored the problem of scientific explanation. Sometimes they proposed fresh explanations, blaming the Puritans, or the bad effect of the frontier, or the low calibre of immigrants, or the absence of an aristocracy, or the overwhelming

[1] *The Dispute of the New World: The History of a Polemic, 1750–1900.* By ANTONELLO GERBI. Translated by JEREMY MOYLE. University of Pittsburgh Press, $19.95.

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materialism of a new country, or bad diet and lack of exercise, for American shortcomings. The bulk of such writing, Dr Gerbi contends, was produced without fear and without research. It was thesis-ridden, but the thesis turns out to be a string of false deductions from wrong information.

Americans north and south strove to set the record straight: this was a main reason why Thomas Jefferson compiled his *Notes on Virginia*. The more absurd elements in the legend dropped away. Yet the essential ingredients remained.

QUITE OFTEN THE VERY MEN who consigned America to a position of hopeless inferiority also toyed with the idea that the Old World was itself tired and corrupt, and destined one day to be replaced by a New World civilisation. Hegel hints at such an outcome in his *Philosophie der Geschichte*. But according to Gerbi, Hegel is typical in not troubling to extend this suggestion:

> To admit America into his system, Hegel would have had to dismantle his whole historical-dialectical apparatus. . . . America, with its enormous and undeniable presence, *naïve et péremptoire*, would have uncovered . . . one of the weaknesses in the system. To gain entry into the triadic pattern the five parts of the world [now including Australia], whether they liked it or not, had to be reduced to three, just as with Hegel the five senses had become three, and the five traditional arts. . . .

Buffon and his contemporaries, though mistaken, had at least been serious. Dr Gerbi's word for the 19th-century continuation of the polemic is "trivialisation." The evidence, one infers, became scantier and more contradictory. The scientific proofs were revealed as pseudo-sciences, and then yielded to mere pontificating or abuse. The Dickens of *American Notes* and *Martin Chuzzlewit* stands forth as one of the worst examples: an egotistical fellow, waxing vicariously indignant about the horrors of Negro slavery, obsessively resentful that the United States had not signed an international copyright agreement and so was pirating his books; a traveller, like many before and since, who simultaneously complained that people ignored him and that people fussed him to death.

I have plundered Dr Gerbi's delightful book in the past and will now find the task considerably eased by this edition. The fresh material in the text and notes—for instance, on the Abbé Roubaud and on Jacquemont—is diverting and often opens up new lines of inquiry. In a brief review it is hard to do justice to the subtlety of Gerbi's presentation. Thus, he is well aware that the whole debate was a polemic not only in being a controversy between denigrators and defenders, but in being a tangle of quarrels between rival scholars—each anxious to contrast his own intelligence with the stupidity of someone else.

THE APPROACH DOES, however, raise some problems. The *philosophes*, and indeed most of those who theorised about America from the early 16th century, tended to portray it as one undifferentiated continent. Whether there were giants in Patagonia was a question as pertinent as the existence of a North-West Passage, or the virility of settlers in Massachusetts. Yet gradually the generalisations focused upon the United States. When Tocqueville or Dickens refer to "America" they mean the United States, with Canada brought in somewhat incidentally. Dr Gerbi does not analyse the stages in this transition, though he offers plenty of incidental references.

It was an important shift in all sorts of ways. The parties to the debate, including Latin Americans, began to speculate on the differences between the two parts of the continent. Were these the result of environmental factors, or of the dissimilar racial, social and religious backgrounds of the "Anglo-Saxon" North and the "Latin" South? By the 1850s, a Latin American like Francisco Bilbao was visualising the two cultures as opposites.

> We prefer the individual to the social, beauty to riches . . . poetry to industry . . . the pure spirit to calculation. . . . It is this that the citizens of South America dare to place on the scales next to the pride, the riches, and the power of North America.

Fifty years later, in a famous onslaught, José Rodó of Uruguay compared the North Americans to Caliban, and urged Hispanic America to emulate Ariel—a creature of the spirit. The *prepotencia norteamericana* was a source of fear and resentment.

In tracing the course of the polemic from Buffon and de Pauw, Dr Gerbi is apt to underplay other ingredients. He deals with some of the counter-arguments to the assertion that "America" was God's major mistake. He does not document the stream of patriotic, sometimes chauvinistic, proclamations of American greatness that poured out of the United States from the 1770s onward. These need to be borne in mind when we consider why 19th-century Europeans denigrated the United States. Some of them were exasperated by American claims that the New World was providentially destined to supersede the Old World, being already far more virtuous and enterprising: in fact, God's country. Dr Gerbi rightly points out that some of the much-quoted European prophecies along these lines prove on inspection to be less enthusiastic than they sound. Even so,

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he could have conceded that some Europeans, such as Richard Cobden and John Bright, and a mass of those who came as immigrants, were almost ecstatic in their praise of America.

As for those who remained highly critical, surely they had some objective reasons that had little or nothing to do with Buffon and de Pauw? The United States produced its own critics; Dr Gerbi comments intelligently on certain of these, but he seems unsure how to interpret them. What they said was more or less what struck Europeans. They deplored the violence, the acquisitiveness, and the vulgarity of American life. Above all they worried over the huge anomaly between the creed of democracy and the practice of slavery. They doubted whether this "piebald polity" (Thomas Moore's phrase) could hold together as one nation; and, of course, it did break apart in the Civil War of 1861–65. After the Civil War, American as well as European critics were alarmed by the extent of political corruption. As Mark Twain said: "It could probably be shown by facts and figures that there is no distinctly native American criminal class except Congress."

There is, then, something incomplete in Dr Gerbi's thesis, once he gets into the 19th century. Though some of the basic themes of the polemic are restated in almost uncannily repetitive ways, the *raison d'être* becomes more various and more complicated than he always allows for. Still, this is a wise, rich and brilliant book. The University of Pittsburgh Press is to be congratulated for having made it available to English readers. I hope there will be a paperback edition; the present price is, alas, a deterrent.

Parable of the Four-Poster

Because she wants to touch him,
she moves away.
Because she wants to talk to him,
she keeps silent.
Because she wants to kiss him,
she turns away
and kisses a man she does not want to kiss.

He watches
thinking she does not want him.
He listens
hearing her silence.
He turns away
thinking her distant
and kisses a girl he does not want to kiss.

They marry each other—
a four-way mistake.
He goes to bed with his wife
thinking of her.
She goes to bed with her husband
thinking of him.
—and all this in a real old-fashioned four-poster bed.

Do they live unhappily ever after?
Of course.
Do they undo their mistakes ever?
Never.
Who is the victim here:
Love is the victim.
Who is the villain?
Love that never dies.

Erica Jong

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MUSIC

Elegy and Iambus

By Robert Craft

1948

Cocteau

JULY 22. DENVER. Tonight, on the way to *Così fan tutti* in Central City, Saul Caston, conductor of the Denver Symphony, manages to prise an answer from I. S. as to how he composed *The Rite of Spring*: "My ear was experienced." (Thanks.)

I. S. is remarkably indifferent to mountains, especially for someone who lived so long in Switzerland; he dismisses the Rockies as "Wagnerian." What does attract him in a landscape is composition, frame, dimension perspectivised by architecture (the castle on the Italian hilltop, the arch of the ruined aqueduct in the pasture). The unique landscape on the walls of his studio is a Zen-like Rembrandt drawing of a black fence bisecting a field of snow.

ABOUT *these previously unpublished excerpts from his notebooks, Robert Craft writes: "Most of the selections from my diaries included in 'Chronicles of a Friendship' (Gollancz, 1972) had been published previously, during Stravinsky's lifetime. This determined the character of the selection, and it should also explain why that book is not a portrait of the composer himself so much as a collection of scenes from the last two decades of his nomadic life. The second volume of the 'Chronicles', of which these excerpts are the first to be published, covers the same years but is more directly concerned with, and offers a more intimate view of, the composer. . . ." Stravinsky died in New York on 6 April 1971, and is buried on San Michele in Venice.*

1949

JULY 1. HOLLYWOOD. Beneath I. S.'s mighty intellect lurks an athlete, all muscle and bone. Ordinarily my first morning view of him, on the porch adjoining his studio, is face-to-feet. He will hold this inverted position, moreover, head on a straw mat, bandy legs skyward, for as long as ten minutes, then execute a whole manual of toe-touching, torso-twisting, knee-bending exercises, concluding with a dozen "chins" on a crossbar in his bedroom closet. Not until he wraps himself in his white terry-cloth robe and sets off for the shower am I reminded how completely this particular "athlete" is lacking in brawn.

July 2. I. S. does not have "perfect pitch." He cannot, out of the clear, distinguish G from G sharp. If his record-player happened to transmit the *Jupiter* Symphony in B rather than in C, he would complain about the slower tempo but probably not about the drop in key.

Except while composing, I. S. rarely sings. When he does, it is in a one-syllable "ta-ta-ta" *solfeggio*, far from the actual notes. Apart from his work-in-progress on the *Rake*, the only "tune" I have heard him "carry" this summer is *"und der Haifisch"* from the *Dreigroschenoper*, which he "sang" not for the music but for the words.

July 3. When he composes, I. S. must be alone; he even closes the windows of his studio, as if to seal himself in. But when orchestrating he likes companionship, often asking me to read to him, interrupting from time to time to say "just a moment" (*i.e.* "be quiet"), then a moment later, "and?". When V. did not feel well and remained in bed one afternoon last week, he brought a table from his studio to her bedside and orchestrated there—ostensibly to keep her company, but *he* was the one who did not want to be alone.

July 4. Though professing to loathe parties, when

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actually attending one I. S. quickly becomes its voluble epicentre. (V. recalls that in their first years in Hollywood they would return from movie-stars' parties and read Dostoevsky together, "to remind ourselves about human beings.") We go to a 4th-of-July pool-side party for I. S., but the guest of honour keeps well away from water, and not only *ex*ternally.

July 5. I. S. is addicted to inter-language puns, especially to those involving words that are proper in one tongue but improper (*"unanständig,"* as he says) in another; yet V. says that he is also an inveterate punster in Russian. (The tendency to play with words as things in themselves, and thus to diminish their primary value as sign functions, may be a withdrawal-from-reality symptom, but in I. S.'s case no other behaviour corroborates the diagnosis.) At the moment he is interested in words that sound the same but mean the opposite (*raise* and *raze*), and in words that sound the same because of a possible etymological connection (*puny* and *puisne*). A sizeable part of his conversation is concerned with language, at any rate, and his pursuit of English equivalents to Russian, German and French idioms can interrupt a meal or conversation for a quarter-of-an-hour while he disappears among the dictionaries in his den and obliges us to await his findings.

August 6. I. S. perfectly fits Freud's description of the anal personality: the cataloguing; the thrift; the accumulating, hoarding, retentiveness; the neatness and exactness; the possessiveness (which extends to people, for he demands absolute fealty from his friends); the exaggerated fears—of funerals, of illness (he will leave a room in which someone has coughed or sneezed), of being without money, of intestinal irregularities. As for this last, the sheer volume of his talk about *govno* is impressive. (The Russian word is more literally suitable than the French, German, or English owing to the charcoal tablets he munches before taking any alcoholic beverage.) No breakfast or lunch passes without reference to his *"poire"* (syringe), while three times this summer, presumably for my delectation, he has described an auto-coprophagous experiment in his childhood. (It was *"sans goût."*)

August 7. I. S., in Russian, is by no means shy of the earthy and the indelicate. One of his workaday critical expressions is *"oo meenya nee sty-eet"* ("it doesn't give me an erection"). Another is the portmanteau word *"pirispal"* (untranslatable, he says, but it refers to "sleeping around"). Still another is *"podmivatsa"* ("to wash one's private parts"). Thus, he will tell the wine steward who has served a corky Chablis to pour it in a bidet and *"podmivatsa."* His usual response to sex gossip—a result, perhaps, of his early legal training—is: *"kto dirzhal ich za nogee?"* ("who was holding their legs?").

August 8. I. S. uses the English forms of the Russian gender pronouns instead of English articles; after swatting a fly, for example, he will refer to the corpse as "she." He has a substantial Ukrainian vocabulary, V. says, though all I know of it is "NE VIHILIATESS," the laconic direction in railway cars that I. S. likes to contrast to the German version: *"Das hinauslehnen des Oberkorpers aus dem Fenster ist wegen der damit verbundenen Lebensgefahr strengstens verboten."* German is a frequent target of I. S.'s ridicule, though at the same time many of his favourite sayings—Wilhelm Busch's *"Erstens es anders ist zweitens als man denkt,"* among them—are in that language. In any event, I. S.'s English is as polyglot as *Finnegans Wake*, from the morning's first *"So-so la-la"* (his usual response to "How do you feel?") to the last comment of the evening on a performance of a piece of music: *"grosso modo."*

August 9. I. S. is obsessed with mirrors—not, I think, out of any metaphysical wish to go through the looking glass (although, like Alice, it could be a question of "I'm never quite sure what I'm going to be, from one minute to another") but simply to assure himself, constantly and from all angles, that everything is in place. He is interested in mirror-writing, too—that sign of neurological impairment at certain tender ages, and of unusual intelligence at others. Still another of his obsessions is with scissors, but only because, like many nearly bald men, he is forever trimming his remnants of "haars" (as he says). Many other utensils fascinate him also. Dentists' tools, for example. And, not surprisingly, hardware stores are a magnetic lure whose spell can be broken only by the purchase of a bag of nails, shiny new monkey-wrench, or implement for his gardening or carpentering. One of his hobbies is making picture frames, and for this he has a diamond glass-cutter, built to his specifications.

August 10. I. S. is fond of small ivory, metal, leather, wood, *papier-mâché* boxes. He has no fewer than forty of them, and he alone remembers their contents. Inordinately, fetishistically fond of leather—its smell above all—he will hold a leather pouch, wallet, tefillin to his nose as another person would sniff a carnation.

August 20. I. S.'s sexual utopia is mammary, his sexual type the Rubens goddess, which may or may not indicate an insufficiency on the part of

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his wet-nurse. It is not an undifferentiated desire —any port in a storm—nor even a "desire" at all, perhaps, but a fixation. Inspired by a robusty woman at a neighbouring table in a restaurant, he will wean himself from the view just long enough to sketch the "heaving embonpoint" on the tablecloth. And whereas his portraits of Picasso, Diaghilev and others are characterised by radical abbreviation, these forms are fully filled (*formosa*) and complete with areolas. Nor is it any use to tell him that if you've seen one you've seen them both.

August 21. I. S. is vain to the point that he will not go out because of a pimple on his nose. And he is a dandy, a collector of cravats who will spend as much as ten minutes in choosing the proper one. ("Nothing is unimportant about a great man," Schoenberg wrote, adding that he would "like to have watched Mahler tying a necktie.") V. recalls that after the première of Falla's *Retablo*, at the Polignacs', Stravinsky and Falla were observed intently conversing in a corner—not, however, about Falla's new score, as she later learned, but about the Spanish composer's necktie.

August 22. I. S. abhors clumsiness in any form, one of the reasons, no doubt, that he loves cats and goes into conniptions against people who drop, spill, stumble. He is also prejudiced against anyone with a loud voice. V. attributes some of the perfect harmony of their marriage to her very soft one.

August 28. I. S. would be happy going to the cinema every day; the worse the film, bad Westerns preferred, the more it seems to please him. "Good" cinema, on the other hand—socially significant drama, Method Acting—generally provokes grumbles. In these three months with him I have seen more films than in any three years of my life.

September 2. Before we leave Hollywood to drive to San Diego today, I. S. obliges us to sit for a minute in silence, as Arabs do before travelling, then to stand while he makes the sign of the cross. This *"prisyest,"* as he calls it, is to ensure our safe return, a Russian superstition like throwing spilt salt over one's left shoulder, or dabbing one's fingers in spilt wine and then touching the back of one's left ear, which the I. S.s never fail to do.

SEPTEMBER 4. TIJUANA. We join Eugene Berman and Ona Munson for the *corrida*. The squalor, dust and stench are revolting, yet I. S., usually super-squeamish about the cleanliness of cutlery, plates, drinking-glasses, does not scruple to eat a tortilla that has been bare-handled by the vendor. Our seats being on the sunny side, I. S. improvises a paper sombrero. Oddly enough, he seems to regard himself as an *aficionado*, though what he actually likes about bullfighting is the pageantry—the parade of the matadors and their *cuadrillas*—and even the noise: the shouts, boos, catcalls, fanfares, blaring brass band. He watches transfixed when the first bull charges into the ring and shouts "bravo" when it vaults the *barrera*, scattering hecklers in the front row. During a crisis, however, when the crowd leaps to its feet, I. S. cringes and cannot bring himself to look. He is plainly horrified, too, when a picador's nag is gored, spilling steaming entrails; when a muleta misses its mark and for several minutes blood expulses from the wound like water from a hand pump; and when a team of mangy plough horses drags the carcass out of the arena while workers in overalls sprinkle sand over the gory ground as matter-of-factly as if it were a stockyard. Then, for a moment anyway, he would make over his Estate to the SPCA.

At the border a U.S. Immigration Officer asks I. S. where he was born. "St. Petersburg", he says, hoping to pass as a Floridian, but his accent leads to further questions and eventually, ineluctably, to "Russia." Ordered to "Pull over," he is then subjected to a barrage of inane questions ("What was your grandmother's middle name?" as I. S. retells it), which infuriates *me* because I. S., who carried "Alien Registration Receipt Card No. 5893407" during the War, has the refugee's deep fear of all border police, customs inspectors, octroi. He bitterly complains of being a "second-class citizen."

1951

FEBRUARY 16. HOLLYWOOD. Dinner with Jean Renoir, who resembles both the chubby blue-eyed baby painted by his father and an ex-boxer gone to grass—or, rather, to grapes, judging by the rubicundity. He is on first-name terms with I. S. ("eeGORE"), but his French is too fast for me and his English too "French." Fortunately, he does most of the talking, about India and his new film, *The River*.

April 16. The death of the dancer Adolph Bolm, a friend of I. S. since the 1910 *Firebird*, shocks and saddens both Stravinskys. They had known that Bolm was in a La Jolla hospital recently, and that he was failing, yet did not suspect that he could be seriously ill. Death, from myocardial infarction, occurred sometime before 8 a.m. When the milkman, looking through the open window of Bolm's room, noticed that he was not

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breathing, he went to the front door, rang for Mrs Bolm and gently warned her to "say a prayer before you go to wake your husband this morning."

In the afternoon, when we take the widow for a drive, she tearfully recalls the first time V. met her beloved "Adja"—in Paris, on V.'s Namesday, September 30, 1920. My own memories of "Adja" are of a kindly man, the most helpful to me of I. S.'s friends when I first came to California. It is true that his account of the first *Apollo*—in which he wore a Louis Quatorze costume, "exactly what Igorfyodorovitch wanted"—soon became familiar, and that his fund of anecdotes about Nijinsky was by no means inexhaustible. Furthermore, it must be admitted that his talk about culture barked at I. S.'s shins, though he played Patience during it, drumming his fingers on the table and nodding noncommittally. When I. S. had the floor, however, "Adja" would prostrate himself at the composer's feet: "*Da, da, da,* Igorfyodorovitch."

Most condolences seek to convince the bereaved that the deceased is "better off where he is now" (wherever that may be), on the grounds that if he or she had lived, then he or she would have had to endure more suffering. This switches the object of grief from the dead to the living, and allows the mourner, released from the obligation to mourn, to continue with plans for his own deathless future.

July 14. While we are at breakfast, the secretary of Evenings-on-the-Roof telephones the news of Schoenberg's death last night—from triskaidekophobia, therefore, in addition to heart-failure, asthma, and all the other maladies. I. S. is more upset than I would have predicted, far more so than he was a few weeks ago by the death of Koussevitsky, whom he knew well. Within the hour he dispatches a telegram to Mrs Schoenberg:

DEEPLY SHOCKED BY SADDENING NEWS OF TERRIBLE BLOW INFLICTED TO ALL MUSICAL WORLD BY LOSS OF ARNOLD SCHOENBERG. PLEASE ACCEPT MY HEARTFELT SYMPATHY.

IGOR STRAVINSKY

Schoenberg's death ends a uniquely tangential relationship. The names of the two composers had been coupled antinomically for forty years, yet apart from that they knew next to nothing about each other.

July 16. **We go to an outdoor dinner at Aldous Huxley's in honour of Julian, with Gerald Heard, Isherwood, the Hubbles, the Kisgaddens. Conversation is highly competitive in the display of up-to-date scientific information, but Aldous and Gerald are so quick at the game that no one** else has much of a chance to play. In gatherings such as this one, Aldous speaks trippingly (as always), Gerald with a just noticeable strut. When Aldous supports a shaky hypothesis at one point, Julian gently exposes his younger brother's credulity. But Aldous is scepticism itself compared to Gerald, whose talk consists in large part of the rashest speculations. Yet the essential difference between the two Angeleno sages is one of temperament. Aldous, one feels, would shine most appealingly in a girls' college, while Gerald would be at his best in a lamasery—if such inextinguishable but entertaining verbosity is imaginable in a holy place. But what bravura performers both!

July 19. Dinner at the home of Frau Mahler-Werfel (bosom of a pouter pigeon, voice of a barracks bugle in one of her first husband's symphonies). Conversation is strenuous for me since it is entirely in German, since this survivor of distinguished husbands and consorts is deaf, and since her wines, champagnes and cordials are unrefusable, being required for her incessant toast-making. To I. S. she quotes Mahler's "only those who can create can interpret", and lets us know that she is aiming the remark at her next-door neighbour, Bruno Walter. When the subject turns to Schoenberg, she tells a story of the composer's objections to the illogical American system of addressing mail with the number before the street. It seems that, to prove his contention, Schoenberg directed a taxi driver to take him "to number forty-five. I will give you the name of the street when we get there." After dinner, Anna Mahler, Frau Alma's sculptress daughter, unwraps her death-mask of Schoenberg, which visibly moves I. S., the more so after she tells him that he is the first to see it. *Absit omen.*

1952

JUNE 18. We leave Iron River at 9.30 a.m. and drive 170 miles along the Baltic-like shore of Lake Superior to Duluth, where an attempt is made to celebrate I. S.'s birthday in a restaurant called "The Flame." But the proper liquid ingredients are lacking, and the only available bottle of wine, a Beaujolais *rouge*, is served in an ice-filled bucket! Not having adjusted to the improbability of finding wine cellars in hinterland America, I. S. nearly explodes, but our travelling companion, Alexis Haieff, defuses him with a fit of giggling. Once calmed, I. S. reverts to his restaurant routine, asking the waiter to remove the ice water; demanding "*un couteau qui coupe*" (this even before trying the one that he has); ordering "a tall empty glass" (as an *étui* for his spectacles); testing the legs of the table for unevenness (and, when a wobble is discovered,

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inserting wedges under all four legs); insisting on the instant removal of used plates (and, in exasperation, transferring them himself to a vacant table). He greatly dislikes having to tip head waiters but never fails to give a dollar to each of the busboys.

V. drives in the afternoon, I. S., next to her, giving directions from a road map spread on his knees. From time to time he resorts to a thermos, thereby flooding the car with a redolence of whisky and his discourse with a phosphorescent glow. But at night, in a motel in Benigy, Minnesota, V. tells Alexis and me that I. S. is deeply offended because we neglected to include him in a backseat conversation about Bach (which we considered too trivial to interest him).

1954

MARCH 16. HOLLYWOOD. Auden and Isherwood for dinner. Auden's face now has the craquelure of an Old Master—which he is, of course, but not *that* old. He is becoming more *moral* by the hour, too—"It is profoundly wicked not to pay one's bills by return mail"—and at this rate will soon be sounding like Moses. Apparently his sexual predilections extend even to cats, for when "Michael" and his mother, "Celeste," swagger into the room together, the lecture-circuit bard unhesitatingly reaches for the former, saying, "come here my *boy*." He borrows Von Hügel's *St Catherine of Genoa* from I. S., loaned to him in turn by Aldous, and departs, listing somewhat from the effects of five martinis and two decanters of wine. Later, I. S. says that when the poet lived with him while working on the scenario of the *Rake*, Yvgenia Petrovna (the housekeeper) reported that the soap, towels and washcloths which she put out each day were never used, and that she failed to find any moisture in either the shower or the sink. I. S. says, too, that once when Lisa Sokoloff sat next to the great poet at dinner and could not resist observing that his fingernails were remarkably dirty, Auden did not reply but later asked I. S.: "And who is that extraordinary woman?"

1955

JUNE 11. HOLLYWOOD. I. S., so far from being tired by his Lisbon–New York–Los Angeles flights, when I fetched him at the airport, wants to spend the evening listening to music. We play Bach's *"Vom Himmel Hoch"* variations, four-hands, but, afterward, when I suggest that the work should be transcribed for instruments, I. S. says that this would be too difficult. I have marked some passages in *Paideia* for him, one of which, a commentary on Prometheus' *"I am bound here in this rhythm,"* he copies in his own hand, as he usually does in the case of music and words he wishes to remember:

> Rhythm is that which imposes bonds of movement and confines the flux of things. . . . The original conception which lies beneath the Greek discovery of rhythm in music and dancing is not flow but pause, the steady limitation of movement. . . .

1958

JANUARY 26. Dinner at the Bel Air Hotel with Aldous. He reminisces about Pound, saying, "even in the mid-twenties one could see that Ezra was mentally unbalanced, but he had great *joie de vivre*, and I preferred his company to that of Joyce, for example, who was so rigid in his habits that he had to be served a certain white wine and no other; and to that of Yeats, though *he* was often amusing if steered away from Spiritualism and on to some such subject as the antics of George Moore. An evening with Tom Eliot, however, could be the most trying of all, and a dinner at his apartment a veritable nightmare, partly because the food was so bad but largely because of apprehension about what Vivien Eliot might say next. Some of her remarks seemed calculated to humiliate her husband. Yet I remember him putting a record on the turntable and dancing with her slowly, cheek to cheek, and wearing an expression of indescribable sentimentality. But what a strange creature, Tom. Imagine *wanting* to dress up in evening clothes and top hat!"

August 2. Aboard the *S.S. Cristoforo Colombo*, New York to Genoa. At about 10 a.m. the new Azores volcanic eruption comes into view, a geyser of seething steam like dry ice in water. Soon three fumaroles are distinguishable, ebullitions of lava boiling into the sea. I. S., who had been using a telescope on the Captain's bridge, reports a maelstrom near the newborn island and says that a neighbouring island has had to be evacuated, its white village and terraced slopes already being half buried in ashes. More than an hour later, a plume of white smoke, from a crater at water level, is still visible beyond the horizon.

October 11. We drive with Rolf Liebermann from Hamburg to Lübeck, the world capital of marzipan as well as the city of Buxtehude, Bach, Buddenbrooks, Bernstein (amber stone, that is). After herring and green Mosel wine in the Schabbelhaus, we visit a twelfth-century almshouse that is still used by about two hundred old men who live in cottage-like cubicles, each with

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flowerpot and mailbox. The residents sit before their doors, some puffing meerschaums, nearly all wearing seamen's caps which they doff as I. S. walks by. But the object of our excursion is the Marienkirchen, and we climb to the organ loft while I. S. tries the instrument, which, though largely rebuilt, was once played by J. S. Bach. On Palm Sunday, 1942, British bombs struck the church, dislodging two huge bells. They are still embedded in the floor, frozen in their molten state just as they had begun to "run", like overripe Brie.

1960

DECEMBER 15. NEW YORK. The St. Regis Hotel. A telegram informs us of the death of Catherine d'Erlanger, my landlady for eight years and part-time employer—as a reader—for four. During this period we devoured a prodigious amount of print together, entire shelves of books and some authors *in toto*, and I still recall much of the reading matter, evidently from having recited it aloud. What these sessions meant to her, apart from a pastime, I cannot say, but the book that made the strongest impression on her was *Obermann*, from which she especially cherished the adage: "Let us perish resisting, and if it is nothingness that awaits us, do not let us so act that it shall be a just fate."

My most vivid memories of "the Baroness"—she was seldom addressed by name and never with the nobiliary particle—are of those readings. A chronic toper by then, she sipped Benedictine the while, lounging in regal deshabille on a sofa that was not only moth-eaten but worse: pruritis was one of my occupational hazards. Her cats, Sita and Terra Cotta, would join her, plumping themselves on either side like courtiers, jealous of each other and of every caller. (Callers of better times, Cocteau, the Sitwells, Michael Arlen, were caricatured on the walls in the Baroness's own, genre Marie Laurencin, portraits.) On some days a tiara adorned her inconsistently orange hair, on others, metal curlers. But her clothing was less varied. At any rate I seem to remember her always in the same maroon flannel sack, which was often inside out; and in the same woollen socks, one of them half-way to the knee, the other all the way down, like Hogarth's Bedlamite, except that the Baroness preferred things French and used to refer to herself as "La Folle de Chaillot."

My recollections of her dinners are no less clear, especially of drinking wine from silver goblets tasting of tarnish. On one occasion I see I. S. precipitating his empty plate in her direction and the Baroness precipitating it back. *"Notre dame des tappettes,"* I. S. used to call her, but he had been deeply fond of her since the Diaghilev years. Besides, she *was* a patroness saint of interior decorators, being dependent on them in her commerce in *bric-à-brac*—she was continually dispossessing herself of the rummage-sale of her surroundings.

She grew corpulent, toward the end, and rarely ventured out. One day in 1957 she fainted in her garden and, characteristically, her first thought on reviving was to introduce the people who had come to her aid. It became apparent that she could no longer live alone, yet would tolerate no companion except a Russian woman who came in the afternoons to paste newspaper cuttings in scrapbooks, an endless task reminding one of Bouvard and Pécuchet. After another fall the Baroness had had to be helped to her bed by the police, and soon after that her son, the Director of BOAC, sent an airplane to take her to his home in Paris. The last time I saw her was the day she learned of the plan for this unavoidable but cruel abduction; she preferred to die in her own home. By this time she had been bedridden for months, but the friend whose mission it was to tell her promised she would "soon be up again and then we'll have fun." Whereupon, during no more than three or four seconds and conceivably for the first and last time in her life, the stoic old lady started to cry.

1961

AUGUST 30. NEW YORK. The Pierre Hotel. Varèse for lunch. Since I. S. is not ready on time, I precede him and in the elevator run into the Hindemiths. After recovering from the surprise of me emerging with the wrong composer, Varèse asks me to introduce him, but by this time Hindemith is several yards away. When I catch up and convey the request, moreover, in the very moment that he *starts* to say "yes," Frau Hindemith *does* say "no." As Varèse watches them hurrying away, I can think of no other excuse than that Hindemith isn't feeling well, which can scarcely accord with Varèse's impression of him later satisfying a copious appetite in the restaurant and positively leaping from his seat to greet I. S. when *he* arrives. Afterward, I S., Varèse and I listen to my recording of *Deserts* in a tape-editing booth at Columbia Records, on Seventh Avenue and 52nd Street.

1962

JULY 8. NEW YORK. *The Sky Above and the Mud Below.* In one frightening scene, when scores of war canoes teeming with painted, feathered and spear-brandishing savages are in close pursuit of the camera boat, I. S. remarks, out of the blue: "And to think that now they're all Dutch subjects."

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1964

DECEMBER 1. NEW YORK. I. S., finishing Françoise Gilot's *Life with Picasso* this morning, inscribes the title page: *"Picasso, le monstre que des fois a raison."*

1965

APRIL 2. AUSTIN, TEXAS. I. S., on the stage of an auditorium answering students' questions, turns at one point to V., seated just behind him, and asks the English for *znatok*. *"Connoisseur,"* she says, pronouncing it as a French word and thereby raising a laugh from the students. (This reminds us of the story of Mark Twain arriving in a German town, sneezing, provoking a *"Gesundheit"*, and Twain's retort: "Thank Heavens someone here speaks English.")

1967

JUNE 2. HOLLYWOOD. The New York doctors' reports of their examinations of I. S. arrive, addressed to V. and not intended for his eyes, but he sees the envelope and confiscates it. Nor is any harm done. On May 24, Dr Donald Simons found him "Very alert, bright. . . . An electrocephalogram was made in my office. It reveals a normal well-formed 9/sec. alpha pattern. There was no trace of any abnormality in the left central-parietal area. There was no evidence of the slowing of the frequencies which is commonly found in elderly people. . . ." The patient "stated that he has some difficulty comprehending women's voices [but] he was able to hear fingers rubbing at twelve inches, which is much better than most people at his age can do. . . . When asked to multiply 7 by 11, he gave the answer as 77 and said there was 33 left over." (Looking for a point to the question?) The report continues: "[He] admits to getting angry at least once a day" —I like that "at least"—and it concludes that the patient has "an alert intellect." Which leaves the patient feeling rather conceited. A letter in the same mail from Dr La Due *to* I. S. remarks on his "voracious consumption of books" and reassures him that "no impairment whatsoever of your mental faculties [has occurred]." As Stendhal says, *"Une partie de la biographie des grands hommes devrait être fournie par leurs médecins."*

1968

OCTOBER 23. We fly from Zurich in mid-afternoon and are met at Orly by Suvchinsky and Morton. The red carpets for I. S. at the Ritz do not stop him complaining that the bed lamps are *"décoratif mais pas très utile."* A buzzer has been installed between his room and V.'s, and Count Zembruski himself, the Managing Director, promises more powerful reading lights, and even a piano, the latter unheard of in these sedate precincts since the death of Chopin. (V. appals Zembruski by asking if kitchenettes and television are available.) A notice posted in the bathroom advises the guest that he is "requested to use only fire wood in the chimney fire-grates in his rooms", and that "it is highly recommended to call in the valet to light the fire when required" —which turns one's thoughts to the Louis furniture, if it should come to that. But, to dissent from the dictum that Paris is too good for the French, where else would a woman receive so gallant a reply from a porter as V. does when she asks what has become of her fur: *"Un rien vous habille, Madame?"* As for *my* room, it is acoustically ideal for listening to the chauffeurs in the Place Vendôme discussing their employers.

1972

OCTOBER 2. VENICE. Manzù's stone, expected at Mestre since last week, is still not there, for the reason, we are told, that last-minute authorisations by bureaucrats both Roman and Venetian had been overlooked. V. telephones to the sculptor himself, who assures her that the stone is on its way and will certainly reach Venice *"domani."* All wrapped up in red tape, no doubt.

Gravitating to familiar places first (looking for a former self and the reasons why the new one is different?), I go to "Mozart's house," next to the Ponte Barcarolli, and to the "Legatoria Piazzesi," to talk to the bookbinder who used to make I. S.'s sketchbooks and who still wears a black smock, as he did then. But I feel lonely afterward, intensely so in the Basilica at sunset, and walking in the white and gold Piazza after dark.

Dinner at Harry's Bar with Nicolas Nabokov (scarlet socks and braces, psychedelic tie). The restaurant is like a subway car at rush hour, and only fragments of Nabokov's talk—about Mediterranean bull culture *versus* Persian lion culture —are audible. Yet he manages to bring I. S. to life by quoting a single one of his expressions: *"On compose la musique avec la gomme."*

October 5. The stone has finally arrived and, thanks to the mayor's intervention, has already been ferried to the island and entrusted to a *marmorista*.

Bill Congdon comes for lunch, all the way from Subiaco, where he lives in monastic retreat (nearest telephone: ten miles), not only from the U.S.A. and a New England Brahmin background but from the last fifteen centuries as well. Of those who knew I. S. more than superficially in his

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later years, and whose lives were profoundly affected by him, Bill is one of the most extraordinary. He remembers the composer's every word, gesture, inflection, from their first meeting in an airport canteen in the Azores in March 1955, to their two final ones, in Assisi, October 21, 1962, when I. S. learned of Goncharova's death, and, in Rome, November 24, 1963, the day he learned of Aldous's. But it was during the summers in Venice, from 1956, that the camaraderie developed.

Painting is Bill's art, yet he is equally gifted in languages. He speaks the Venetian dialect, having at one time been a gondolier, and is fluent in a half-dozen Mediterranean tongues, as well as in at least one African. His leaves of absence from the cenobitic life in Subiaco are spent in Africa, especially Mali, from which he has just returned.

I do not know whether Bill ever took the Franciscan vow of poverty, but he is a voluntary have-not, uncharitable only about the American System. He complains at lunch that "even the grissini wrappers are desecrated with American-type advertising," a remark that leads to "protest art." This, so he argues, "cannot be of any value if the frustration is at the creative level. Besides, the artist's first problem is always the same, to understand his motive. The second is to be patient." I admire this man, though I do not share his intellectual religiosity, for Bill is an "intellectual" despite himself, forever discussing concepts and making distinctions, always acutely self-aware. At one point he remarks that "If the maestro had been younger he would never have accepted me. He was too crisp and precise as a young man for the likes of me. Age expanded him."

When V. and I go to San Michele in the afternoon, Bill returns to Subiaco and the world of the Sixth Century—except for his collection of I.S.'s recordings from the world of the Twentieth. But he will come every April, as he did last year and this. Nor will I ever forget his words when he first raised his glass to us at lunch today: *"a noi quattro."*

The tide is low, exposing the scab-like remnants of plaster on brick walls that make Venice look more emaciated and diseased than ever. Rickety docks, loose moorings, creaky pintles: the whole city seems to rattle, scrape and grind. The cloacal function of the canals is especially conspicuous, too, and the wash in the wake of our boat, and the drains from pipes and spiles suggesting that the city is either flushing itself or foaming at the mouth. The low water level also affects San Michele. Today the Archangel seems to promise not that the graveyard will ever yawn but only that Death Will Out.

"Vietato Fumare" reads a Dante-like sign above the inner entrance. (A question of "no smoke without fire," hence the fear of connection with the eternal flames?) Within the walls the thin autumn foliage exposes the grotesquerie of the décor, both iron (a raven, wings spread above a monument as if violently struggling to fly) and marmoreal: wreaths, roses, *putti*, coats-of-arms, busts—of Garibaldian males and weeping-willis (*le villi*) females with bindweed in their hair. In the lane segregating the ranks of deceased *"Religiosi"* and *"Suore,"* we fall behind a procession: a priest, preceded by a cross-bearer, followed by a coffin-cart pushed by four men in black suits and black caps like tam-o'-shanters, moving in step as if in a macabre pavane.

The names in the "Reparto Greco" read like the cast of *War and Peace:* Wolkoff, Potemkin, Galitzine, Bagration (Princess Catherine, whose tomb is under a fig tree with large, blush-sparing leaves). I. S.'s stone is not yet here, and a litter of kittens is romping on his grave. (Why, in all the length and breadth of the island, at this one place? Because if ever a man possessed what Novalis described as "the awareness of the interrelations of all things, of conjunctions and coincidences," that man was I. S.)

Suddenly looking up, I discover that *my* grave, Number 38, is occupied! And *newly* occupied at that. I touch the ground, flex my limbs—as Lazarus must have done—say *"cogito ergo sum,"* ask V. to verify me. But neither of us recalls any mention of the event of my death in the recent obits (no epipsychidion in the *Daily American*?) So if I am still *here,* who is *there*? And, in the language of "The Three Bears," what is he or she doing in my grave?

October 6. The stone has finally reached the "Reparto Greco," though not yet the actual site of the grave. Since its two sections have not been joined, we are unable to form any impression of it, even after workmen unwrap the upper layer from its bed of excelsior, and then stand by, brown paper hats in hand, awaiting tokens of the widow's appreciation.

The cemetery's administration building, where I go to pick a bone with the Direzione about who has usurped my grave, is a lugubrious room piled with ledgers, each with a year stamped on its spine. A sallow book-keeper, Signora Mondovecchi, coldly listens to my case, grimly removes "1971" from the shelf, opens it to a map of coffins stacked like bottles in wine cellars. Pointing to an area marked *Spazi Perpetuità,* she explains that in practice "perpetual" means only ninety-nine years, to which I reply that this will not be long enough in the case of I. S., whatever may become of Venice. *His* name has been entered in red ink,

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V.'s, next to his, in black. But in the place where *I* had expected to be stretched out, the mortal remains of Princess Aspasia of Greece now languish, her name freshly blotted on the page. A greatly flustered Mondovecchi assures me that the Principessa is to be transplanted to her native country, "so soon as money has been raised to pay her debts in Venice." (A case of squatter's rights, then?) But another thought seizes La Mondovecchi: what if this money is *not* found, if a moratorium is denied, and if the exhumation does not take place? Then the sale to me will have been lost. Whereupon La Mondovecchi, and she is very "old world" indeed, urges me to put a deposit on the plot adjacent to the Principessa, for the reason that *her* companion and closest friend, the morganatic Queen of Greece, is rumoured to be *"molto malata."*

As La Mondovecchi turns to shut the Domesday Book, I inquire about the mosaic-encrusted mausoleum facing I. S.'s grave on the other side of the path and covering a hundred times the territory—a sarcophagus of such dimensions, in fact, that one pictures its cadavers not resupine but striding about. In La Mondovecchi's ultimate roll-call this House of the Dead is registered under the name of Messimis, which I assume, aloud, to be that of a Greek shipbuilder. But La Mondovecchi corrects me. "No, Signor. Maestro Messimis is a very important music critic."

1973

JUNE 10. VENICE. The city has escaped death by drowning for yet another winter only to succumb to an invasion by the Japanese—aerial units only, thus far, to judge by the 707-size contingents in the Piazza, and unarmed except with cameras, maps, yen. "The Americans of the '70s", the Italians call them, except that the Japanese reportedly clean their own rooms and make their own beds.

At San Michele we are obliged to wait for a *convoi funèbre*, led by a gilded water hearse with gold-winged orb. The Orthodox section is a blaze of poppies found nowhere else on the island, which raises the thought that they might be an ancient mark of heresy. I. S.'s stone is unexpectedly small—too like the size of his own small body—and so narrow that the letters of his name look crowded on the single line. In the brief time we are here, flowers are brought by several visitors—one of them an ex-ballet dancer, to judge by her legs and her interest in the Diaghilev monument. We search among the newer graves for Ezra Pound's but find only those of one "Oreste Licudis" and one "Pericle Triantifillis," the company of whose *names*, at any rate, the poet would have appreciated.

Back in Venice I go to the Scuola de San Rocco, my first visit there without I. S., to hear a Ravel concert. This reminds me of his comment on the Trio when we last heard it together: *"C'est comme une très longue conversation dans un boudoir."*

June 11. To Torcello, *via* the Rio della Pietà, a sewageway of empty bottles and assorted offal —the lees of the last minstrel, as it were. But in the lagoon boys are diving from a barge that has been girded against the bruises of stone corners and canal traffic with rubber tyres. At Torcello weeds writhe behind our boat—"like souls in torment," V. says, no doubt thinking of the island where "all flesh is grass." The beautiful floor of Santa Maria Assunta, in Torcello, has been covered with pews, and the beautiful walls are marred with dial-a-lecture telephones.

June 12. San Giorgio dei Greci is heavy with incense this morning, and the images of Simeon Stylites flanking the centre portal of the altar are obscured in smoke. The Panikheda service seems to differ from last year's in that the genuflections are fewer and the tempi of the chanting faster. The larger share of the latter is done by a boy in jeans and striped shirt—who loses his place, however, whereupon the Archimandrite *sings* the page number to him, disguised in melismas. We are able to follow most of the service, from the first *"thanatos"* to the final *"makarios,"* and can join in the repeated Kyries and Alleluias.

V. stands before a fresh laurel wreath, and at the end of the service the Archimandrite places a crust of consecrated bread in her hands. The name "Igor" occurs six times in his prayers.

Afterward, on the way to the island, the Archimandrite chats with us about the fame that has come to him because of I. S.'s funeral. (He cannot pronounce the Italian *ci, che,* or even *gio,* saying *unditsi* for *undici*, *vetsio* for *vecchio,* and greeting a workman on the dock with *"buon zorno."*)

The crown of laurel is on the stone when we arrive, and lighted candles have been planted in the ground at its head. Once again the grave is like a bier.

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Alan Brownjohn

The Ship of Death

First, prolonged and weird estuarial waters,
And so wide before you realise: full of rusted,
Sunken, purposeless objects; or creaking guide-lights
Offering unclear channels, curving paths
Of a grey water greyer than the rest. And now the eager
Sea-birds that followed have dropped back for the shore.
The strip-lighting blinks on in the Dining Room, the cutlery
Scintillates. But you don't enjoy their small-talk at the table, as
The white-coated band on the platform lilts into selections,
Selections: it's a musical about your life they
Are playing them from, and it could not have run long in town.
Now the ship tilts, and the crockery slides downhill; and
There is a tannoy announcement from the captain:
Welcoming you to the ship, hoping you will be
Comfortable, and reminding you there is no destination.
You leave the table for the bar. Already it's dark, which
Might be more interesting; though you expected, looking out,
That a scattering of stars might show; and the sky's dull.
Far off, is it west, you can pick out an esplanade
With lights like a frippery of beads; you
Never attained that one, wherever. Your drink hasn't lasted,
The print in your newspaper blurs and you can't see faces
Very clearly. The map, of the route of the ship in
The frame on the wall, is practically blank. Is there a rest room?
The stewards don't attend to you, they are attending
To the bed-makers in the cabins. The customs-free shop
Is a shut grille. The handrail in the corridor misses
Your hand, upstairs both sides of the deck cant you into
The bullets of the spray. The wake is dark, the prow is chained off.
You go to the Engine Room for the monotone of the drone,
But that is no anaesthetic. There should be
Amusements aboard, surely? What about the staterooms
Looking so sumptuous in the brochures? And the gilt lounges?
Something worth having this ticket for? God, this ship feels
No different from being alive; because
Your seaboard walk shakes like your walk on land, and
All your thinking ends at the same advice: it's time, no
Other choice, to go down the metal steps to
Where it says Men, and lock the door; be alone, alone,
You may find, there, what's wrong that you couldn't
Name, that nobody found out.
—So this you do, except
That when you have closed the door, the door locks
On you. Rust runs in lifelong trickles from the welded
Bolts of this cubicle; everything shudders, even more,
In you and the whole ship. No hammering for help,
Or calling, it's H.M.S. Death, death: the eternal
Accumulated store of everything life became: just
Yourself, as you are, and your face in that bowl. Smile, you're free
To vomit your self-regard for the rest of the voyage.

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Alistair Elliot

The Aegean: Summer: 493 B.C.

'. . . took easily the islands off the mainland,
Chios and Lesbos and Tenedos.'
HERODOTUS, *History* 6.31

There is something strange about so much blue.
And I cannot believe it has no edge:
it has the feel of this side of a cliff.
But it seems the fishermen say blue just goes on,
further and further. But it must run out
somewhere: so must the land. It does in islands,
so I suppose the mainland is an island.

Anyway we are here, conquering the world.
Travelling it would be enough for me:
but it also has to be kept. That's harder.
We have beaten their soldiers but these people
won't accept that—perhaps I wouldn't either—
so we have exercises like today's.

Daryush sent us to the island there—
I can see it from this table—peacefully
recovering, giving back the sun its heat—
to net and decimate the islanders.
This morning hand in hand and joining on
so as to cover the ground from coast to coast
—it was like a game; everyone was from Fars—
we walked across it letting them through the net
but quietly killing every tenth. The counting
was done by me for our section, and Farhad
killed them. I did the best I could to make it happen
so we killed not just men or not just women
but children too, to thin them equally,
so that each family would remember us,
but Farhad said he was tired of killing women—
and then we found a young one in a field.

Farhad said he couldn't—it would be like
spitting on food or pissing on the Fire.
He made her stay with him; took an old man
instead; but then, after a baby and a boy,
said he was too exhausted to go on.
We let him go—we could see the girl was lovely.

It's been a hard day. We are tired, and some
were seasick coming back.
They're calling me—
The scream was Farhad. As we should have thought
(but they had been trying to talk for hours and hours)
she killed him: bit his shame off, stuck a knife
under his naked ribs. I had to stop them
from killing her in turn. That is not right.

Perhaps it is her beauty and not justice
that made me save her, but I made them wait
for the Commander. Then when Daryush came
he just gave her to me: "He was your brother."

Mother, I can't. I don't know what to do.

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NOTES & TOPICS

On Auden's Death

By Anthony Thwaite

THERE ARE SOME who hold to a persuasion (loyal but aggrieved, given to disappointment rather than condemnation) that Auden's importance as a poet began to diminish rapidly and disastrously with his departure to America in 1938. Such people instance prolixity where there used to be terseness, smugness where there was unease, cosy verbal games in place of urgent and memorable warnings. But the decade of the 1930s—in the English-speaking world of poetry so much "the Age of Auden"—is not a period to be prolonged out of feelings of nostalgia, whether genuine or vicarious. The *Poems* (1930) still survive, and *The Orators*, and all the rest of the pre-1941 work, whatever Auden did or didn't do to it in the way of revision or suppression. It is an assembly of work that embodies a period as much good poetry does, but we have no right to expect Auden in his sixties to have perpetuated —by imitation, as it were—the Auden of his twenties and thirties. He became a sage rather than a prophet; but above all supremely an entertainer, a virtuoso who believed that poetry can display many voices, many skills, and that it has something to do with the disinterested intelligence:

> *After all, it's rather a privilege*
> *amid the affluent traffic*
> *to serve this unpopular art which cannot be turned*
> *into background noise for study*
> *or hung as a status trophy by rising executives,*
> *cannot be "done" like Venice*
> *or abridged like Tolstoy, but stubbornly still insists*
> *upon being read or ignored: our handful*
> *of clients at least can rune.*

I think it's worth noting that younger poets (such as John Fuller and James Fenton) who have responded sympathetically and affectionately to Auden during these past few years have done so with particular attention to the post-war poetry—*Nones, Homage to Clio, About the House*, and so on. Auden's work is still a force, not a spent one.

This Auden of the later books was someone who had gratefully found a way of life and a place in which to live it: in particular, his "toft-and-croft" in Austria, a haven of routine and mild pleasure among his "own little Anglo-American musico-literary set." Tetchily content, unconvinced and repelled by the cant of the young and the politically zealous, he frequently looked back to his childhood (a privileged one of nannies and Greek, antique symbols now) and contrasted it with the uncomely present of

> *lasers, electric brains,*
> *do-it-yourself sex manuals,*
> *bugged phones, sophisticated*
> *weapon-systems and sick jokes.*

Privacy and common sense, friendship and good manners, the blessing of survival itself—these were the daily benefits for which he was thankful. But this *otium liberale*, this cultured retirement, is given its special edge through Auden's peculiar technical gifts, by which the commonplace is enjoyed in a thoroughly uncommonplace vocabulary, erudite, quirky, and often donnishly eccentric:

> *In his dream zealous*
> *To attain his home,*
> *But ensorcelling powers*
> *Have contorted space,*
> *Odded the way;*
> *Instead of a facile*
> *Five-minute trot,*
> *Far he must hirple,*
> *Clumsied by cold,*
> *Buffeted often*
> *By blouts of hail*
> *Or pirries of rain,*
> *On stolchy paths*
> *Over glunch clouds,*
> *Where infrequent shepherds,*
> *Sloomy of face,*
> *Smudge of spirit,*
> *Snoachy of speech,*
> *With scaddle dogs*
> *Tend a few scrawny*
> *Cag-mag sheep.*

He could be grander and less neologistic than this: "An Encounter" (that poem which observes a meeting between "Attila and his Hun Horde" and Pope Leo by the River Po in the year 452) needs no recourse to the OED and makes a real point about the mysteries of civilisation and barbarism. He could also be delightfully straightforward and witty, as in "On the Circuit", which considers the modern ordeal-by-culture of the peripatetic poet on a reading tour:

> *An airborne instrument I sit,*
> *Predestined nightly to fulfil*
> *Columbia-Giesen-Management's*
> *Unfathomable will. . . .*
>
> *And daily, seven days a week,*
> *Before a local sense has jelled,*
> *From talking-site to talking-site*
> *Am jet-or-prop-propelled.*

EMOTIONAL URGENCY and a deeply committed sense of struggle both with life and with one's material seem to be basic requirements demanded by many critics of poetry today. The fact that Auden's post-war work conspicuously

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lacks these, is indeed contemptuous of them, partly accounts for the way in which he has been taken at his own valuation, as a reactionary and rather supercilious mandarin who looked back to a time when

> *Speech was mannerly, an Art*
> *Like learning not to belch or fart:*
> *I cannot settle which is worse,*
> *The Anti-Novel or Free Verse.*

Yet Auden's actual performance, his wide-ranging and individual experience, equally at home or not-at-home on his "Austrian ground", as a carpet-slippered celebrator of Oxford eccentricities or as "a New Yorker who opens his *Times* at the obit page", belie the limitations he seemed to have assigned to himself and which others have chosen to accept or condemn. "The Cave of Making" (his memorial poem for Louis MacNeice, which I quoted at the beginning), "Whitsunday in Kirchstetten", "Prologue at Sixty", "Old People's Home" and "Talking to Myself" are all poems in which Auden is at the centre, ruminating, conversational, at ease with himself but without self-satisfaction, and they speak from true and deeply-felt concerns with a wisdom and decent mannerliness, aware without huffing and puffing that

> *Virtue is always*
> *more expensive than Vice, but*
> *cheaper than Madness.*

The Auden whose dramatic characters in the 1930s (according to Isherwood) were always ready to flop on their knees became less inclined to preach and prescribe, lecture and warn, and was "Most at home with what is Real." His poems of the 1960s and 1970s have a different, not an inferior, validity. What we mourn is not a lost leader but a many-minded poetic intelligence which was still in full production.

The American Foundations

Fairy Godmothers or Avenging Angels?—By WILLIAM LETWIN

PHILANTHROPY, American Style, is characterised by private foundations. Ford, Rockefeller and Carnegie are the largest and most famous examples, and thousands of smaller specimens have been endowed by rich men to further every kind of good work and some not so good. The idea of a "benevolent perpetuity"—a fund that would continue to make gifts in accordance with its founder's wishes long after his death—is at least as old as Rome, and such institutions exist in many countries though by no means all. But that the great foundations are American is not a mere accident. In order that foundations may flourish, three conditions must concur. Government must permit a man to realise his intentions long after death (which Communist governments, for instance, are not notably eager to do); government must make this form of gift attractive by special tax concessions, otherwise the prospective donor may do better to use up his money while he lives; and economic conditions must allow men to become very rich, very suddenly. These conditions have pertained in America more than anywhere else.

What is a man suddenly enriched by his own efforts to do with a vast sum of money? That is a question to which the rest of us never devote enough sympathetic attention. The possibilities are limited.

1. The newly-rich man can try to spend his fortune. But a large fortune grows so fast that it is hard to consume the interest not to mention the capital; and since skill in consuming, like any other skill, grows only by arduous training and painstaking practice, a man who has spent fifty years earning is generally too tired to acquire much ability in spending. His descendants will get better at it in time.

2. He can leave the money to his children. But to dump the responsibility of dispersing a fortune on one's children is lazy, whereas the founders of great fortunes are often not very lazy. Besides, many of the American ones are incurably imbued with the superstition that a child born into money is as disadvantaged as a child born with six fingers or two heads.

3. He could turn it over to the government. But this again is indolence and it transfers responsibility to public officials, whom he does not necessarily admire or trust.

4. He himself could give it directly to the poor or deserving. But the difficulty is to find the poor and deserving. The mechanical solution of sharing out his money equally among all the poor would accomplish practically nothing. Even a fortune like John D. Rockefeller's (amounting to $250–$500 million) would not provide one good meal for each of the billion or two of the world's people who are commonly described as "poor", especially after the fund paid the cost

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of addressing and posting some billion cheques. To deal with the problem more sensibly—by locating a smaller number of worthy beneficiaries, to whom it would be possible to make a gift of real substance—is an extremely difficult undertaking. To manage such an enterprise requires high powers of organisation, sharp judgment in scrutinising candidates, financial shrewdness to prevent wastage, and, in general, scrupulous efficiency. It calls, in short, for just the qualities that successful businessmen build into the companies from which they draw their fortunes.

It is natural, then, that some great tycoons, determined to dispose of their fortunes sensibly, organise their foundations in a manner parallel to the business firms from which the fortunes first flowed. And they hire the same sort of executive: professional, sober, practical rather than speculative, amiable without being friendly, and above all decisive. Some other donors, feeling justifiably that nobody else possesses the required qualities as markedly as they themselves, have managed their own foundations as long as they lived—and left them thereafter in the hands of their former associates, men of proven ability to run a business.

Begun for all these good reasons, foundations have flourished in America. Their number is constantly expanding, their assets and expenditures growing, and they have over the years made to flourish many good things; education, medicine, science. But in the last few years they have come under attack, and from two directions. Critics who have fallen into despair about the conditions of American life accuse the foundations of contenting themselves with programmes that are "passive . . . unimaginative . . . and uncreative." By this they mean that the foundations should turn away from the humdrum causes of the past in order to help solve the "urgent social problems of today"—race relations, poverty, crime, drugs, pollution, and the like. On the other hand, as the result (in part) of a few forays that foundations have made into the field of social reform, as well as the help that a few foundations have given to candidates for political office, Congress took in 1969 the first steps towards a system whereby the Federal government will regulate the foundations. In short, while one bystander is urging the foundations to do battle against Goliath, another is busy tying their hands behind their backs.

IN THE CONTEXT of this crossfire of criticism, Mr Nielsen undertook his massive study of the "big" foundations,[1] the thirty-three largest, each holding assets of over $100 million. All together the big foundations hold over $10 billion out of the $20 billion or so of assets owned by the total number of 25,000 foundations. Such a study, needless to say, required money. It was furnished, needless to say, by a foundation, The Twentieth Century Fund, which must be congratulated for its courage, since Nielsen's conclusions will make neither him nor his sponsors more popular in the foundation world. It is a terrain that Mr Nielsen is admirably equipped to explore, having himself served as an officer of foundations, besides having been an academic and a Washington official. Because of this (or despite it) he has subjected the big foundations to a cool, not to say cold, and frank examination. The book is lucid, unsurpassably well-informed about the history and practice of the foundations, and amusing, full of detailed narrative (some of it damaging), and far more rewarding altogether than the title might suggest to the lay reader. But the main conclusion that Nielsen reaches, or the main premise from which he starts, is disastrously dangerous. He believes that the foundations must tackle the Urgent Social Problems which, in his view, are threatening the political stability of American democracy. If, however, the foundations march off on the trek he maps for them, they will be committing suicide—and will deprive America of institutions that do a little good and less harm but provide many people with small yet welcome conveniences.

WHAT HAS THE COMMUNITY a right to expect from foundations in return for conferring on them the artificial privileges of perpetual life and exemption from taxes? What rules of deportment should they be required to observe, and, more important, what sorts of purposes should they be permitted or required to pursue?

As to the first question, Nielsen insists on certain custodial and fiduciary principles. A foundation should detach itself from the financial interests of the founder, his family and friends, and the business concerns controlled by the donor. Such detachment requires that the foundation's directors be mainly "public" persons rather than creatures of the donor, and that the foundation's investment portfolio be diversified rather than specialised in the stocks (especially voting stocks) of companies controlled by the donor, his family, and his cronies. Furthermore, a foundation should spend all its income. And it should publish annual reports that candidly disclose its financial situation, its philanthropic theories and plans, and its current spending

[1] *The Big Foundations*. By Waldemar A. Nielsen. Columbia University Press, $10.95, £5.

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programmes. One learns with some surprise that many foundations fail or refuse, despite the requirement of the 1969 Federal tax law, to report on their activities. One may wonder whether it is really essential that a foundation should spend its whole income each year, though obviously a foundation that never spent any of its income would be self-defeating or warrant the suspicion that it is tax-dodging. Yet, in general, Nielsen's principles on this score are observed by the most business-like foundations.

Much debate should be raised, however, by Nielsen's answer to the more important question of what purposes foundations should pursue. Nielsen argues that in return for the special consideration they receive from "the public", foundations should pursue the "public interest", attack pressing "social problems", and actively seek to "promote social change." One immediate difficulty about such prescriptions is that Americans differ about what constitutes the "public interest" and how it is to be furthered, about which social problems are "pressing" at all and which most pressing, and about how much "social change" should be allowed and in which directions. All these disagreements are the stuff of politics; so Nielsen's principle amounts to urging foundations to get into politics or, in any event, to get closer to the arena of political debate and action. This would certainly be novel ground for the foundations, carrying them into battles which they are not likely to survive.

Until now foundations have operated on a much more pacific theory. They have acted as though they were consciously following the general ethical principles that govern the giving of personal gifts. A gift is something the recipient is delighted to get, that he might not have been able to get for himself, and that the donor quite enjoys giving. And once he has given it, the donor ought to abstain from influencing the uses to which the recipient puts it. A gift is something that pleases the recipient, not something that the donor thinks will be good for him or will improve him. These precepts, not always easy to observe when the donor knows the recipient personally, become quite perplexing when a foundation has to deal with beneficiaries about whom it knows practically nothing. One way that foundations have dealt with the problem is by discovering goods that almost every potential recipient would be pleased to have. They might have given away cash, no strings attached, to be spent just as the recipient liked; apparently they suspect that some recipients would spend the money on things they would not wish to give him. What else would everybody be happy to be given? The foundations seem to have discovered two things: Education (on which they spend over a third of their income) and Medicine (on which they spend about 20%). These goods—on which the foundations have spent the greater part of their incomes, with such great effect that, for instance, the Rockefeller Foundation has practically annihilated hookworm, yellow fever, and a few other diseases—have another amiable effect. The gifts benefit not only the recipients but also everybody else. Everybody benefits from the improvement of his neighbour's health and wisdom, or might plausibly be expected to do so. To say this does, of course, overlook the unattractive impulses of envy and *Schadenfreude*. It deliberately contradicts the fashionable thesis that people are indifferent to their absolute standard of living, caring only for their standard relative to others, so that any improvement in the situation of one man is interpreted by all others as a deterioration in their own. Neither rationality nor sympathy are so extinguished that men resent a neighbour's recovery from a disease, especially a communicable disease. In short, then, the foundations may have been stodgy in sticking to their habitual purposes, but those purposes make good sense on the whole.

By giving money for what everybody wants rather than for what some reformers think they ought to have, the foundations have played fairy godmother rather than avenging angel.

NIELSEN ARGUES THAT this is no longer good enough. He starts from the premise of urgency, a premise more agitated than accurate, which many Americans share. He believes that the United States is in the midst of a great crisis. The people no longer trust government or the liberal-capitalist economy to alleviate the problems of crime in the streets, pollution in the air, and enmity between the races. The foundations, together with other non-profit voluntary associations, must step into the gap to bring about essential social changes.

Nielsen fails to recognise that if the foundations followed his call they might support reforms which he, or others, would consider to be bad for the country and that they might be destroyed in the process, which would be bad for them and the country. There are large disputed areas in American politics today, issues about which Americans disagree vehemently and even vitally. Were the foundations to support any party or contending group in this struggle, in such a way as to tip the balance on any particular political issue, they would be worsening the general political problem. When a foundation gives money for Education or Medicine, it tends to benefit all members of the community. But when it gives money to any particular contestant in a political dispute, it certainly injures all the other contestants, reduces their chances of winning, makes the game seem

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less fair, and quite uselessly raises the temperature of the contest. Moreover, those political groups who do not enjoy its support become its enemies and wait for a chance to take revenge. This is, in fact, just the response that has already been provoked by such instances of "activism" as the Ford Foundation's programmes to establish "neighbourhood control" of Black schools in Brooklyn, to stimulate the registration of Black voters in the South, or to aid the organisation of Mexican-Americans in Texas. In the course of the last venture, as Nielsen tells us, funds given by the Ford Foundation were used to campaign on behalf of a Mexican-American candidate for the mayoralty of San Antonio. As a result, the incumbent Mayor called the Ford Foundation and its beneficiary "the two most subversive organisations in the country" and a disinterested Congressman said that the support thus given to "militant and radical groups . . . who are at best irresponsible and who represent a real danger to peace and safety and progress" had led "to the emergence of reverse racialism." If the foundations do more of this, they will meet more such criticism (and worse), deservedly. There is no reason to suppose that the managers of foundations can make the correct political choices. Nobody has authorised them, in their capacity as operators of a philanthropy, to make any political decisions. It is not likely that they would long outlive their entrance into politics.

BOTH THE DETRACTORS of foundations and those who press "activism" on them exaggerate their power. Twenty billion in assets, which sounds like a good deal, yields an annual income of say $2 billion. But governments in the United States spend about 100 times more. Quite apart, then, from the desirability of "activism", the foundations are not financially well-placed to solve problems that government finds it difficult to solve. What they can do, in a small way, is to sponsor activities outside the proper range of government. One of the most important has been to support private universities, which still lead among the best American universities and which have repeatedly been able to stand out for academic freedom when state universities had to bow to their political masters. Foundations have supported research of many eccentric sorts which could not have been approved by government research agencies. Foundations have, admittedly, accentuated fads in research. They have encouraged unfortunate vogues in educational method, sponsored projects that were ridiculous or faintly sinister, and helped waste many people's time and much money. What matters more is that they are centres of private initiative. At a time when more and more people are becoming clients of government, foundations have made it possible to finance costly projects without going to the state. They have contributed to a free society by behaving as patrons, givers of gifts, rather than as reformers, instructors in virtue. If they now transformed themselves along Nielsen's lines, they would destroy the character that has made them beneficial as well as the goodwill that has made them possible.

Orientalists at Odds

Letter from Paris—By VAMADEO SHASTRI

THE OCCASION was expected to be an unusual one, when the Twenty-ninth International Congress of Orientalists convened in Paris. At the previous congress, held in Canberra, serious doubts had been expressed about the validity, in our times, of the concept of an "Orientalist", and some alarm had also been caused by the growing numbers of participants from all over the world, by now reaching several thousands. There were many who felt that the term Orientalist belonged to a "dead past" when Europe was the centre of the world and the rest of the world was the object of European activity and study; it should now be replaced by some other less Eurocentric term.

There was also the problem that the growing numbers of participants first diminished the usefulness of these gatherings and, second, made it increasingly difficult to find hosts willing to accommodate these immense congresses. At the Canberra congress invitations were received from Cairo and Tehran. At the last moment, the international consultative committee (whose main function, according to the Statutes of the

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Congresses of Orientalists, is to recommend on the place of meeting of the following congress) was saved from an embarrassing choice by the arrival of an invitation from Paris. The following meeting, the twenty-ninth, would take place on the hundredth anniversary of the foundation of the organisation, and it seemed appropriate that this anniversary meeting should be in Paris, the city where the organisation was born, and that the end of the first century should provide the occasion for some basic reconsideration of the function, nature and purposes of these congresses.

In fact, however, contrary to the general expectation, no fundamental change took place. True, the name of the organisation *was* changed by a very narrow majority of the consultative committee from "Congress of Orientalists" to "Congress of the Human Sciences in Asia and North Africa." It was reported that the conservative-minded members of the committee (Russian and British!) joined forces in favour of retaining the older term. But they were outvoted by a majority including most of the Asian representatives, who not unnaturally objected to seeing the study of their own countries, languages, and civilisations designated by so aggressively "Western" a term. On the larger and more fundamental proposal, put forward by the French, that the congress be broken up into smaller units dealing with specific regions and topics and that these take the place of the all-embracing single Congress of Orientalists, no progress was made and the proposal was abandoned. The congresses, therefore, under their new name, will continue to assemble on their present scale.

FOR SOME TIME before the congress met in Paris the French had been under some apprehension that it might be disturbed by political (and even terrorist) interventions from various interested parties. They feared, in particular, that Arab organisations might seize the opportunity of an International Congress of Orientalists with Israeli participation to stage a repetition of the Munich Olympics operation. As a precaution against this, the committee decided to refuse all proposed papers dealing with contemporary political topics. In fact two were rejected, one by a Syrian on Israeli politics, the other by an Israeli on Syrian politics. This resort to what can only be called censorship seems to have been based on the somewhat dubious assumption that a decision by the Arab guerrilla organisations to attack or not to attack Israeli participants would be determined by the Congress agenda! In any case, the ban was not consistently enforced. An East German scholar was permitted to present a paper on the stages of the development of Egyptian socialism—though this might perhaps have been classified as literature rather than politics. More importantly, in the Far Eastern section, a number of Soviet scholars presented papers in markedly political terms on various aspects of internal and external policies of the Chinese People's Republic. (The latter, though invited, was not represented at the congress at all.)

As it happened, however, no disagreeable incidents of any sort at all occurred between Arabs and Israelis, though both were present. In the less favourable atmosphere of Paris they did not fraternise as they had done in Ann Arbor, Canberra, and other remote places where previous congresses were held; but neither did they come to blows, verbally or figuratively. Only one minor incident occurred involving an Israeli scholar. A lady with more learning than discretion presented a paper on "Pagan Elements in the Islamic Pilgrimage." This brought vigorous criticism from several Muslim listeners. But the issue here was basically a religious one—the objection by Muslims to such a critical approach to a basic precept of their religion. Muslims, unlike Christians or Jews, have not yet accustomed themselves to the "higher criticism" of their religious beliefs. Such criticism is evidently all the more offensive coming from an unbeliever and a woman. That she was also an Israeli may have been an aggravating circumstance but was not the true cause of the trouble, which in any case passed over without undue incident.

THE REAL EXCITEMENT came from quite a different source. Some indication of impending trouble could be gathered at the very first plenary session at which there were significant departures from long-established practice. It has always been the custom of International Congresses of Orientalists that at the inaugural session the members of the committee in the host country sit on the platform accompanied only by the president of the previous congress. On this occasion the Australian president of the previous congress sat in the front row, not on the platform, except at the beginning when he made his formal address of greeting. Instead, Professor Gafurov, the Tajik head of the Institute of Oriental Studies in Moscow and head of the Soviet delegation to the Congress, sat with the French preparatory committee. The East Europeans alone attend these conferences in the form of *delegations*[1]—

[1] This distinction also appears in their papers, in their use of the word *"we"*, instead of *"I"*, in accepting, rejecting, or propounding what in other regions would be called opinions. This *"we"* is neither royal nor editorial, though it partakes of both. It is basically collectivistic and disciplinary.

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the others come as scholars and as private persons —and Gafurov was the only outsider to sit on the platform with the French presidium. The presence in this seat of honour of a single foreign guest—not the outgoing president or secretary-general—did not fail to excite critical comment. Gafurov's presence was the more visible in that on this and all subsequent occasions he wore a Central Asian skull-cap on his head to symbolise his "Asianity"—something which, as I heard from some of his Russian colleagues, he never does in Moscow. Gafurov was not content with sitting on the platform uninvited (so our French colleagues assured us). He also insisted, equally uninvited, on delivering a speech which was largely political in content, and full of the required quotations from the utterances of Mr Brezhnev. No doubt these go down well when he addresses academic rallies in Moscow, but it all made a rather painful impression on a gathering of scholars assembled in Paris.

During the days that followed the Soviet delegation was further involved in two manoeuvres, in one as the object of attack, in the other as the attackers. The first of these was concerned with the plight of Orientalists in the Soviet Union and in countries under Soviet domination, who for one reason or another had displeased the authorities. Two groups in particular were in view. One was the Czechoslovak scholars (and especially the Czechoslovak Sinologists), who were being subjected to very strong pressures in Prague and who had not been permitted to attend the congress, nor even to continue their own work at home. The second group were Soviet Jewish scholars who had applied for permission to emigrate. It was learnt that the department of science of the Central Committee had decided last autumn that "Orientalists" were persons of strategic importance, and could not therefore be allowed to leave Russia until at least three years after ceasing work. In most cases permission to leave had either been refused or indefinitely delayed; and, in the meantime, the scholars were dismissed from their appointments, prevented from carrying on their work, and forbidden to participate in this congress or in any other form of scholarly activity. One Thursday morning (19 July) a special meeting of section 9 (Chinese Studies), attended by more than a hundred scholars, was held at which three resolutions were adopted, deploring the absence of the Czechs (though without naming them) and others who had been forcibly prevented by authority from participating, regretting the absence of scholars from the People's Republic of China, and regretting that the Soviet authorities had not allowed the Sinologist Vitali Rubin (a Jewish specialist on ancient Chinese philosophy) to attend the Congress. Due notice had been given of this meeting and of its agenda, and the Russians had announced their intention of attending and of "stating the true position." In fact neither they nor their henchmen appeared, and the resolutions were in consequence carried unanimously. The normal practice would have been for resolutions passed by a section to be read to the final plenary session. In fact however the French presidium (and/or secretariat), contrary to established practice, suppressed these resolutions. The texts were not read.

This was not the only instance of French deference to Soviet wishes. The question arose in a more acute form over the issue of the venue of the following congress. At the meeting of the consultative committee (Friday, 20 July) two invitations were before the committee for consideration, one from Mexico and the other from Moscow. The invitation from Moscow was somewhat surprising, in that the twenty-fifth congress had met in Moscow in 1960 and it has not been usual, in the long series of congresses, to return to the same place after so short an interval. A lively discussion took place in which the question of "the repression of Orientalists" by Soviet authorities and the specific case of Vitali Rubin were raised, while the Soviet representatives, for their part, cast doubts on the standards of Mexican scholarship and the suitability of the Mexicans to act as hosts to so distinguished a gathering of Orientalists. Finally, a vote was held by secret ballot, at which twenty-one votes were cast for Mexico, fifteen for Moscow, and two returned blank ballots. Before the vote, Gafurov told the committee that Dr Rubin "would be allowed to leave the Soviet Union." Next day, after the plenary confirmation of the vote, his spokesman claimed that he had been mistranslated (cf. *Le Monde*, 24 July).[2]

ONE ASSUMED THAT, with the decisive vote in the consultative committee, the matter was settled and that the next congress would indeed be held in Mexico. It soon became known however that the Soviets were not content to let it stand at that but were making a most determined effort to reverse the decision by fair means or foul. Their first method was to bring very strong pressure to bear on the French presidium to find some way of upsetting the decision and transferring the choice to Moscow. I do not know what methods of persuasion they used, but rumours spread and flourished, and there was ominous talk of "capitulation" and even of "complicity" directed against certain prominent

[2] On 12 October 1973 it was reported from Moscow that Vitali Rubin had been arrested.

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Frenchmen. One ageing British scholar even likened the situation to 1940—with "the barbarian at the gate, the Americans far away and the French represented by academic left-wing equivalents of Laval, Bonnet and Pétain. . . ." In the event, the French presidium decided to stand firm and submit the resolution to the plenary session in accordance with established practice.

Realising that this method would not work the Soviets resorted to their second tactic. This was to make use of certain technical formalities. As the hall began to fill for the plenary session, it was clear that the Soviet delegation had been busy overnight. Many were present who had taken no part in the congress and were in no way associated with it—but were recognised as militants and activists of the French Communist Student movement. On the platform, various members (of the French preparatory committee and the international consultative committee) seemed to be engaged in vigorous arguments. At one point the Australian ex-president, apparently pleading with Gafurov, was physically thrust aside by the Soviet leader.

AFTER SOME DELAYS caused by these brief tumultuous encounters, the meeting began. At first things seemed to be going normally. The French chairman read the resolutions and asked the plenary assembly to approve them by acclamation in the usual way. This was done. Then, after the resolutions had in fact been voted by the assembly, Gafurov suddenly rose and demanded the right to speak. The chairman ruled him out of order. But the leader of a Soviet delegation has no difficulty in dealing with an elderly French scholar. Seizing the microphone Gafurov treated the audience to a harangue in which, beginning by expressing his love and admiration for the Latin American peoples in their Struggle for National Liberation (this at a meeting of oriental scholars debarred by statute from discussing politics!), he then proceeded to denigrate the Mexicans, their scholarship, and their invitation, and to demand that the congress be held in Moscow. To achieve this he proposed (or, to be more precise, demanded) that the resolution of the consultative committee be put to the vote of the plenary session. In the first place, this was clearly out of order, since the resolution had already been approved. In the second place, a contested vote was clearly impossible in a gathering of close on two thousand people at which there was no way of knowing which were accredited members of the congress with the right to vote and which were not. An extraordinary scene followed. The Chair impotently tried to maintain

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order and a British member of the consultative committee sitting on the platform answered the Soviet assault with an appeal for the proper observance of constitutional procedures. The Soviet leader, as on previous occasions, demanded "the right to reply" (an expression which he must have picked up outside Russia). In the ensuing *mêlée* he was effectively silenced when some functionary had the brilliant idea of switching off the microphone. The meeting then continued with its normal agenda in relative calm and ended without further incident, though with obviously heated altercations among the platform party.

The carefully planted claque of Soviet supporters in the hall duly played their part in seconding the Soviet delegation with speeches and cat-calls. But it was clear that the overwhelming majority of scholars present (even including many who, politically or for other reasons, would have been in sympathy with the idea of going to Moscow rather than to Mexico) were shocked and appalled by what they felt to be ruthless and shameless behaviour by the Soviet delegation on this occasion. Most of the scholars present were trained philologists or social scientists. They knew that the semantics of a word like "invitation" can vary considerably from culture to culture. This graphic illustration of the Soviet connotation of the term was perhaps the most important scholarly disclosure of the congress. From comments I heard afterwards in the hall, even from the docile Indians, it was clear that Gafurov and his tactics did more harm to the Soviet image that afternoon than whole battalions of cold warriors.

One interesting question remains—why were the Soviets so determined to capture the next congress, even at the cost of exposing themselves in this way and of revealing the real nature of their attitudes to scholarship and to international scholarly cooperation? Some clue may be found in the previous congress of orientalists held in Moscow in 1960. Two features were noteworthy. One was the determined, ruthless, consistent and universal exploitation of every possible occasion for political propaganda directed to the Asians and Arabs present. The other was the frenzied attempt to secure permanent control of the congress by arranging for the following one to take place in one or another of the Soviet satellites. It was only with the greatest difficulty that this second purpose was frustrated and the International Congress of Orientalists rescued from Soviet control. Clearly they were determined to try again. Having seen how they were prepared to behave even in Paris, one could have only most alarming forebodings about how they would behave on their own ground in Moscow—and this time one may be sure that they would not let the congress escape from their hands once they had got it.

THERE REMAINS THE QUESTION of their real purpose. I suspect that the answer to this is to be found in their struggle with Mao's China.

The International Congress of Orientalists has become an important forum for the peoples of Asia. What in Western countries is still regarded as an esoteric hobby pursued by a minority of scholars and eccentrics is, for the peoples of Asia, something of central importance to their national life. In the Soviet-Chinese confrontation, Asia is both the battlefield and the prize, and control of the Congress of Orientalists would give the Soviets a valuable propaganda forum to use against their Chinese rivals, one of whose most dangerous weapons is their ability to appeal to "fellow-Asians" against the Russians as "European imperialists." If the next congresses are held in Moscow and in other places under Muscovite control, the Chinese will no doubt continue their policy of non-participation, leaving this weapon in Russian hands. If, however, it meets in Mexico (and thereafter in other places not under Soviet control or influence), Chinese scholars may well turn up in large numbers and confront the Russians, attacking them at their most vulnerable point.

In "the struggle for the hearts and minds of the peoples of Asia," these international congresses, begun a hundred years ago by a small group of unworldly European philologists, may well prove of crucial importance. The Russians clearly think so, for in Paris they made great efforts and took great risks. But they suffered a great defeat.

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BOOKS & WRITERS

Two Hisses for Democracy

Politics & Theory—By KENNETH R. MINOGUE

MODERN DEMOCRACY is a mediaeval idea with a Greek name. What the word describes is a cluster of institutions (such as parliaments and juries) and ideas (such as consent and representation) which would hardly have made sense to a classical Athenian. Yet, in an access of Victorian philhellenism—the kind that made J. S. Mill remark that Marathon was a more important battle in English history than Hastings—all the subtle features of modern government which make rulers both responsive and responsible came to be called democratic. We are thus led to forget that the notion of Majority Will, implied by the term "democratic," is one that, in some of its forms (such as the plebiscite) we recognise as a common prop of despotism. By venerating an abstraction in this way, we encourage civics classes to disseminate the absurd notion that Britain has a House of Commons only because it is impractical for fifty million Britons to conduct the public business of the nation in Trafalgar Square.

One of the difficulties of strictly popular politics is that of irresponsibility: peoples, like hereditary monarchs, cannot be sent packing. This was a difficulty even for the Athenians, whose sense of reality was sharpened by the fact that the people who voted for war were likely to be the same people who had to take the field. In modern life, constant fluctuations of opinion would produce chaos if decisions were daily and immediately responsive to shifting tides of popular opinion as numerically determined. Nevertheless, the appeal of democracy as an abstract principle (conceived in a great variety of ways) has been that it provides a constant ferment of criticism which prevents our complicated institutions from hardening into torpor. This democratic fizz in our public life may be traced in terms of its shifts of nomenclature—"participation" and "people power" have been recent points on the line. Professor Macpherson would, alliteratively, add "property."

FOR PROFESSOR MACPHERSON, like many others, makes "democracy" stand for something much more than just a set of political arrangements.[1] It is a society "enabling individuals equally to use and develop their human capacities." It stands for "a fully human life." It is clear that he thinks we do not live such a life now, and that the nightmare from which we are beginning to awake is something called "Capitalism." He finds the ethical core of Capitalism in a mistake about the nature of property, closely involved with a belief about the concept of Man which Professor Macpherson describes as "artificial, perverse, and temporary."

It is difficult quite to convey the character of Professor Macpherson's argument because there is a striking contrast between the content and the style. All of his writings—and the present set of essays ranges from a piece on Hobbes first published in 1946 to a set of six essays written specially for this collection in order to provide a synoptic version of the argument—are closely reasoned in the style of modern academic political theory. They are concerned with such concepts as democracy, liberty, property, equality and the like: exactly what one would expect to meet in Political Theory courses in universities. The discussion is stiffened by a fluent and plausible view of the modern history of political ideas back to Hobbes and Locke. All of this is familiar, and it does not prepare us for an element of the apocalyptic just below the surface. Like the stiff frock-coats of Victorian businessmen, which often concealed romantic hearts, the austere style of Professor Macpherson conceals a passionate message.

The message runs more or less as follows. The development of a capitalist society—which in an earlier and celebrated book, *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism* (1962), he called possessive market society—necessitated a change in man's understanding of property. Instead of standing for the means to a full human life, it came to be narrowed down to meaning land and

[1] *Democratic Theory: Essays in Retrieval*. By C. B. MACPHERSON. Clarendon Press: Oxford University Press, £2.75, paper £1.25.

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capital—material things which are merely the means to producing what is necessary for a full life. This changed view of property was articulated in Hobbes and Locke, who established a concept of Man as a creature of potentially infinite desires, consequently locked in competition with his neighbours. It displaced the earlier conception of man as "a doer, a creator, an enjoyer of his human attributes"; and the fundamental error of modern political thought has been the inability of political theorists (including Mill, Green, Rawls *et al.*) to break out of the narrow Capitalist conception of man and property to this more human idea.

But this has been no mere intellectual mistake. It responded to a type of society which is now changing for the better. Partial breakdowns of order, and the consequences of technological mastery, are slowly eroding our inherited ideas and allowing us to work our way through to a more humane concept of man, similar in some respects to what was held in the past, but at a higher level than before. The emerging view of property takes it not as the right to exclude others from the use of some material object, but as "a right to a kind of society or set of power relations which will enable the individual to live a fully human life." The phrase about "a fully human life" is a recurring motif. But we are never told whether it means every cook a politician, more basket-weaving (and similar integrative leisure activities), or an end to labour being divided into intellectual and mechanical. It certainly seems to mean an end to the "materialism" we say we all detest; and it probably means men being hunters in the morning, fishermen in the afternoon, and critics in the evening.

FOR IF ALL THIS HAS a familiar ring, the reason is clear. It very closely resembles the account of the modern predicament given by the great Diagnostician, Karl Marx himself. But whereas Marx wrote to supply a key to the universe for unsophisticated people, Professor Macpherson seems to write for his fellow academics. He has devoted much close reasoning to the arguments of Hobbes, Locke, Burke, and the rest of the canon. His tendency to sniff out Capitalist apologetics wherever he looks has produced some odd readings of intellectual history: his anachronisms have stimulated intellectual historians such as Keith Thomas, William Letwin, John Dunn, Peter Laslett and Isaiah Berlin to refute him with chapter and verse. For although Professor Macpherson has a formidable grasp of 17th-century history, his knowledge is always at the service of a thesis which is essentially analytic. The history looks, in the end, like *essence* only in the sense of flavouring.

FOR THIS REASON, it seems more appropriate to understand Macpherson as advancing an analytical framework in which a number of formal "models" are abstracted from the confused and often rhetorical utterances of many participants in political debate. The most famous of these models is that of "possessive market society." That his thought revolves around a single analysis seems to be confirmed by the fact that the commonest kind of critical conclusion Macpherson arrives at is that the writer he is considering has *failed to realise* one or other features of a model. Hobbes, for example, "failed to realise" the cohesive potentiality of the bourgeoisie, and Mill and Green "failed to realise" that the individual property right on which they insisted meant a denial to most men of equitable access to the means of life and the means of labour. But it is never very clear how we are meant to take these models. Sometimes their point seems to lie in the consistency of the axioms of which they are composed; sometimes it seems to rest more on descriptive plausibility. When it comes to describing a "model of socialism," Macpherson draws back because we do not yet know enough about socialism's "inherent properties." Indeed, as this discussion proceeds, he abandons the game of models altogether and waves a magic wand by telling us that

> in a socialist state, the existence of a predominant will for political freedom may be more important than institutional arrangements.

And sometimes these apparently formal intellectual constructions become glutinously entangled with eccentric comments on current politics as when we learn that

> two-thirds of the world is already in revolt against the market morality and searching for new ways of establishing human dignity.

For all the sophistication, indeed the genuine intellectual interest, of Macpherson's argument, we are thus constantly forced back to what seem to be its Marxist roots. To reduce so careful a thinker to his presumed predecessor may well seem a crude form of comment, but it is difficult to see what else to do when the identities are so exact. Macpherson seems to believe in a one-to-one relation between an idea and the "kind of society" that is supposed to generate it. It is always the *needs* of the society which create the thought: no messy interrelationships. There is also a Marxist posture of hard-boiled realism, as when any possibility of salvation "by goodwill," or "by any improbable conversion of ruling élites to a new morality" is contemptuously brushed aside.

And finally, there is that crucial element of dogmatism in modern Marxism by which hope

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lies in "partial break-throughs of public consciousness." To hold these beliefs, in other words, is honorifically identified with "consciousness." To hold any others is to have been anaesthetised by the System.

ONE OF THE MAIN DIFFICULTIES of this kind of abstract political thinking is precisely its disposition to think in terms of "systems." Consistency is all, and a rationalist wedge is inserted between our miscellaneous practices and our tidy thoughts, in an attempt to give to the one the homogeneity of the other. *How can we call ourselves a democracy when . . . ?* runs the common refrain.

John Stuart Mill opposed this kind of rationalist excess a century ago. Since no type of constitution is perfect, he argued, the best reason for proposing a reform was that it was *not* consistent with the principle of the existing constitution. In a democracy, he went on, the presumption is "in favour of arrangements tending to check the impetus of the popular will." This salutary piece of political wisdom has failed to take root. A variety of simple rationalists, eager to implement the abstract idea of democracy in its full rigour and majesty, have long been battering down the complicated restraints we have inherited from the past.

JOHN PLAMENATZ has produced a thorough and balanced discussion of such 20th-century critics of democracy.[2] He has himself very little in the way of a message, and remains on solid ground because he largely limits himself to the traditional clarificatory role of the philosophical bystander. If, as the timing of publication might suggest, his book was initially provoked by the arguments about democracy arising from the social disorders of the 1960s, he has left such matters behind in order to take a longer view of critics and rationalisers of democracy. These critics have clearly been widely influential. Professor Plamenatz several times quotes Robert Dahl's remark that

> it is fashionable in some quarters to suggest that everything believed about democratic politics prior to World War I, and perhaps World War II, was nonsense.

The engine that generated this conclusion consisted in taking democracy as an abstract principle, drawing out what were thought to be its implications, and discovering that reality was very

[2] *Democracy and Illusion: An examination of certain aspects of modern democratic theory.* By JOHN PLAMENATZ. Longman, £3.50.

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different. Plamenatz is tempted to regard the discovery as "absurd and arrogant." It is certainly mistaken as a serious political judgment.

Against this mistake, Plamenatz reconstitutes the common-sense view of democracy. He passes in review the almost endless list of concepts by which sophisticated political scientists have tried to exhibit the actual working of Western political democracy as a fraudulent exercise in public relations masking the supposed realities of power. Roberto Michels' "iron law of oligarchy", Joseph Schumpeter's "manufactured will", C. Wright Mills' "power élite" are passed in a critical review that resembles an Oxford tutor taking to pieces a gifted but incoherent pupil. This is characteristic Plamenatziana, an acquired taste that is sometimes too dry even for those who have acquired it, but which is here focused upon exactly the right kind of problem: political argument vitiated by unstable assumptions. Among those assumptions, not the least important are Greek ideas of democracy as the equal availability of public offices to the citizens of a *polis*—an idea which can only generate paradoxes if incorporated without qualification in an account of modern representative institutions.

Scepticism about the received notions of democracy has led on to what is here called "Revisionism": those political scientists who have tried to present what they imagine to be a more realistic (or, alternatively, a more clearly formulated) account of democracy. Clarity of formulation generally means construing a democratic decision as if it were an economic price, something mechanically generated by "market" forces. Some of Plamenatz's sharper donnish comments are reserved for the more pretentious versions of the economic theory of democracy. What do Dahl and Lindblom mean by their "loose and perfunctory" references to "streams of utility accruing to the voter"? And when Downs is passed in review as providing a prolix, technical, and supposedly more precise definition of "consent", Professor Plamenatz comments: "This attempt at greater precision is a move towards irrelevance."

Democracy and Illusion, then, illustrates one of the fundamental difficulties of political understanding: writers on politics may be relevant and realistic, or they may be theoretical and remote. Every move towards conceptual precision is a step away from the actual realities of politics. This is not, of course, the same as to say that accounts of political reality must be sloppy and vague. It is merely that they have their own special kind of precision, and that arrogant theoretical freebooters from neighbouring territories such as economics, puffed up with pride in graphs and formulae, may easily ride acrross the territory of politics, may even capture Moscow, but will find that the reality retreats before them.

In terms of Plamenatz's particular penchant for pursuing multiplicities of meaning, the conclusion is ironic. For the actual *meaning* of democracy is comparatively unproblematical and will be understood by most of those who use it, even when they belong to different systems of government.

Stalin and Roosevelt differed vastly in their practice of government, but understood the term "democracy" in pretty much the same way. For once, the problem is not one of communication, of which, indeed, there may well be too much. Plamenatz in effect adds a new right to those associated with democracy—the right to deafness:

> If everyone has the right to be heard, does it then follow that everyone is obliged to listen to anyone who chooses to speak? If God had intended us to take such undiscriminating notice of one another, he would surely have provided us with a more complicated brain, and with many more than two ears . . . citizens even in a democracy need to be able to shut their doors and their ears to one another.

Democracy is partly about how we listen to each other, and too much responsiveness is as disabling as any other excess. Here Plamenatz is giving its due to that thread of understanding of democracy which emphasises how impossible life would be if every citizen were a lively participant exercising his natural right to speak. The real world, by contrast with the bleached realms of abstraction we constantly encounter in works of political theory, contains bores and obsessives whom responsiveness would fatally encourage. But although Plamenatz builds up a careful and balanced set of considerations to constitute his view of democracy, he stops short at what would seem to be the conclusion to which he is leading: namely, that no type of politics can be understood in terms of analytical principles. What counts is always the specific habits and attitudes of the people who engage in the activity, and these habits cannot be studied "analytically" at all. They require historical understanding.

GEORGE WATSON'S *The English Ideology*[3] tells us nothing at all about the general principle of democracy, but it does reveal a good deal about the kind of soil in which one element of democracy—a wide franchise—grew up in the Britain of Victorian times. Indeed, since one of the arguments he deploys is that the Victorians did not believe democracy to be the best form of government, we have the odd conclusion that

[3] *The English Ideology*. By GEORGE WATSON. Allen Lane, £3.95.

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democracy is sometimes brought into existence by the very people who oppose it. But this particular argument, like several other misunderstandings about the Victorians which Mr Watson sets out to correct, is a bit of analytical froth in a work whose main virtue is to present for us a rounded picture of Victorian political life.

Picture, portrait—or caricature? None of these words quite captures what Mr Watson is trying to do. He has built his book around a set of considerations which are normally treated as a mere background to Victorian history. Perhaps the best analogy is the medical inquiry into perceptual anatomy, which produces a picture of the body in which the lips are huge, because we are constantly aware of sensations from them, while the legs are dwarfish because most of the time we are not aware of them. Each generation has its own "perceptual past" in just the same way—these days, the decades around 1789 and 1917 are more directly plugged into our historical nervous system of inspiration and reflection than most other periods of the past. Among the Victorians, as Mr Watson tells it, Greece was a source of lively admiration, while the 18th century was felt to have been notably deficient in certain desirable qualities.

Such a perceptual past is a silent partner in many of our political moves. So too is the very style of argument and discourse. One of the best chapters in Mr Watson's book describes the change in Victorian politics from the conversational style of Wellington and Palmerston to the vogue for platform oratory that appeared around the time when Gladstone and Disraeli began their ascendancy. And this change seems to have been a response to a consciousness of popular opinion and an eagerness to impress. "It is doubtful if Gladstone discovered himself as an orator before his early fifties; but before old age he was widely accepted as supreme." Mr Watson quotes Beatrice Webb commenting upon the responsive faces of a radical audience with the words:

> "It might have been a woman listening to the words of her love."

If Joseph Chamberlain could have this sort of effect on an audience, what of de Gaulle, Churchill, Kennedy and the rest? Adolf Hitler did actually have just this kind of erotic understanding of the relation between leader and followers. Such considerations reveal imaginative possibilities in the actual conduct of politics which are like uninvited guests at the banquets of political theory. Such things are conceptually masked out by the models of Macpherson and by the formulae of the economic theorists.

Whoever takes the politics out of democracy will end by taking democracy out of politics.

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Unman the Barricades

Fictions and Factions in Criticism—By JOHN SPURLING

SPENDING A TERM as resident writer in a university has made me acutely conscious of the gulf that divides the writer from the critic. By the critic I don't mean the journalist who writes a more or less readable column around his immediate reactions to a new book, but the professional academic student of literature with his quiverful of historical categories—Classicism, Romanticism, Realism, Symbolism, Modernism, Neo-Modernism—and his familiar references to at least the main trends of psychological, philosophical and political thought. Of course a professional man must have his terms and uphold his "mystery", but the question is how much all this arcane lore has to do with the making or the understanding of fiction. It is not so much that the necessarily self-taught, self-made writer tends to seem more and more of an amateur, almost a dilettante, in comparison, as that he is apt to slip out of sight altogether. Critic calls to critic across the primeval writer. It is as if a template of criticism were superimposed on a particular writer or period and subsequent generations of critics were more concerned to improve or replace this template than to assess the poor ramshackle creature underneath in his own terms, or at least in terms that he would have understood.

A corollary of this is that if a writer somehow gets left out of the process, is not at some crucial but indeterminate moment placed on the critical list of key literary figures, he is cast into outer darkness, forgotten, neglected, or at best drawn at the chariot wheels of his more fortunate contemporaries as a footnote or brief parenthesis. Again and again the same group of champion charioteers—Lawrence, James, Joyce, Woolf, Faulkner—race round the critical arena while their form is assessed and re-assessed, and only if one of the professionals in the ringside seats is prepared for his own good reasons to devote time and study to one of the neglected, may he hope, perhaps long after his death, to belong to literature.

So I applaud the furious energy with which Brigid Brophy springs to the rescue of her fellow-writer Ronald Firbank. He is pre-eminently one of the neglected; not forgotten, but labelled and stacked away as "minor." Fearing no doubt that her critical biography of him[1] should have no more effect on the "professionals" than to make them nod their heads and say "yes, an interesting critical biography of a minor writer," Miss Brophy presents the whole book as a polemical defence of fiction; of fiction as an art; of fiction as an art to be practised in a particular way; of Firbank as an outstanding practitioner of that particular method. Thus she presumably hopes to turn the tables on her adversaries, questioning not simply their assumptions about Firbank, but their assumptions about how to approach fiction in the first place.

The basis of her approach is an attack on "naturalism" or what professional critics generally prefer to call "realism", reserving the term "naturalism" for that strictly limited 19th-century school of writers associated with Zola. But since most writers are ultimately concerned to be realistic and most arguments about fiction revolve round the question of what is real and how best to capture and express it, I think with Brigid Brophy that the term "naturalism" is less confusing; at any rate it is too useful to be buried with Zola. Miss Brophy's argument begins as follows:

> A novel is a something in the real world whether or not it is a naturalistic novel. But the naturalistic convention consists of pretending that the novel is a nothing, that it isn't there. Putting the childish mechanism to adult use, the naturalistic novelist pretends to prolong also the insignificance of the child. By the naturalistic convention, the events of the plot succeed one another in the reader's experience as if they were events in real life or in a dream. . . . The naturalistic novelist crouches low over his literary film-projector, re-assuming the child's inferiority and literal smallness in comparison with the heroes of the daydream, and directing attention away from his own existence and, usually, the existence of the projecting mechanism. . . . In the 20th century, however, and probably not without relation to the literal invention of film, the lights were switched on and the illusion collapsed. Self-consciousness crept upon both novelists and readers. Naturalism died, as any artistic convention must when that happens, because both sides found themselves unable any longer to believe in it. It became the mark of 20th-centuryness in fiction that the role of the work or of the author or of both is now a constituent of the work itself.

Her main contentions are that readers, associating novels with their own childish daydreams (she makes much play with Freud, as though to carry the war still further into the

[1] *Prancing Novelist*. By BRIGID BROPHY. Macmillan, £8.00.

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professionals' camp), have felt guilty about enjoying them; that for the same reason they have given too little credit to the writer for his actual creation, believing that anyone with the time and inclination could quite easily write down a daydream; and that consequently the death of the naturalistic convention with its large element of daydreaming is a cause for rejoicing, since the novelist is now free to "offer his readers, on the supposition that they are his grown-up equals, only the things they can *not* supply for themselves because they are things unique to him, the products of his imagination." She goes on to stress the importance of design, which "demonstrates, in its operation, the relationship and proportion of each theme in the material to all the others", which "analyses the creativeness of the material", whose "creation, too, is an act of imagination"; and with some suggestion of how the 20th-century novelist in general "is no longer tied to the Victorian and daydream habit of designing in terms of hero and events", she proceeds to devote five hundred pages to a detailed exposition of Firbank's life and work.

NOW WHETHER OR NOT Miss Brophy makes a good case for Firbank's importance, whether or not it is possible to *argue* the reader into admiring a particular artist, her defence of fiction as an autonomous art, as an art still gloriously unconfined by its many past achievements and open to exploration and development in the direction she indicates, through the imaginative interrelation of material and design, reads to me like very good sense. Indeed until my recent experience at the university, I should almost certainly have leapt on to the barricades beside her yelling Death to Naturalism. But now I feel it necessary to pause and consider: in striving so fiercely to win a battle for the excellent cause of innovatory, revolutionary fiction, are we not in danger of losing a war? Aren't we liable to be labelled "Modernists" or some variant of the term and to find ourselves ranged with one group of doctors as against another? And if that happens, aren't we subscribing to the template system, conniving at precisely the sort of treatment of writers against which Miss Brophy is so vigorously and at such evident expense of time and energy, for the sake of only one of them, taking up the cudgels?

An example is to hand. The theoretical and decidedly polemical essays of Alain Robbe-Grillet did much to promote the movement known as the *nouveau roman*, as well as to establish himself as the movement's chief exponent. Without this almost meaningless label it is possible that neither he nor the other writers associated with him would have received so much critical attention. But I fancy that his associates, if not he, would

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now be heartily glad to be rid of the label, to be judged by the novels they have written rather than by the theories of writing they are supposed to exemplify.

IN AN ESSAY in his new book *The Concept of the Avant-Garde*,[2] John Weightman admits that he finds "the theoretical statements of the New Novelists extremely interesting and, for the most part, intelligible and even acceptable as philosophical principles" and he goes on, a little wearily but quite fairly, to summarise these statements:

> It is now old-fashioned to assume, as everyone once did, that the function of the novelist is to show a character or a group of characters living through a phase of life in a recognisable social context. People, whether seen from the outside or the inside, are not "characters"; they are indefinitely complex series of appearances to which it is risible, and almost vulgar, to attach proper names. Time is a mystery—an always immediate mystery, since the past and the future are mere illusions of the shifting present. Any realism of the social context is out of the question, because reality is infinite and multifarious and can only be rendered linguistically by partial, and often mutually exclusive, grids. There are no plots in nature, so that to tell a story in terms of cause and effect is to accept a naïve fiction.

But he then adduces, apparently from his own reading of the novels themselves, this unfriendly generalisation: "On the whole, what the New Novel gives us in the place of the traditional story is very carefully arranged linguistic structures palpitating in a sort of void, as if they were autonomous patterns or puzzles," and adds, with now open hostility, "For me, the New Novel in some fundamental way lacks necessity, and the odd passages I appreciate and remember are unfortunately those which are closest to the traditional novel."

It is clear that Professor Weightman is attacking more or less the very theory of fiction that Miss Brophy is defending, and indeed many of Miss Brophy's more venomous barbs are directly aimed at the readers and critics who would be likely to applaud Professor Weightman for his bold and British common sense. But what has become of the poor writers? Their theories apart, is Professor Weightman coping successfully, or coping at all, with the actual novels written by the so-called New Novelists? The essay from which I have quoted is really a review of a single novel by Robbe-Grillet, *Project for a Revolution in New York*, and is more of a record of the clash between the reviewer's and the author's temperaments than a serious attempt to study the book. But even if Robbe-Grillet has laid himself open to this sort of treatment (and he has characteristically written the accompanying publicity handout just as his reviewer characteristically refers to it and argues from it), surely Robbe-Grillet's failings and obsessions, if they are such, are not to be brought in evidence against Claude Simon, Michel Butor and Nathalie Sarraute just because they have allowed themselves to be grouped, or been grouped willy-nilly, in a movement called the *nouveau roman*?

As it happens, Professor Weightman's book also contains an essay about Nathalie Sarraute. He begins with a lucid and sympathetic summary of her theoretical views. No one could accuse him of misunderstanding or over-simplifying what these novelists say they are trying to do; he disagrees with them, but seems at the same time to be fascinated by them, as certain non-Marxists are by Marxism. Yet his attempt to grapple with Mme Sarraute's first five novels is both superficial and misleading and one cannot quite see what has gone wrong with an essay that began so well until one arrives at this remarkable statement:

> It will be clear that, although I have the highest respect for Mme Sarraute as a person and an intelligence, *she has not converted me to a belief in the New Novel* [my italics]. As after reading Robbe-Grillet or Michel Butor, I am left with a feeling that a genuine impulse, valid within a limited field, has been generalised into a system which warps the writing, or at least makes it rather boring.

There in a nutshell is the dire result of importing ideologies into the discussion of fiction. I can only urge Professor Weightman to begin again at the other end, to cast all his concepts away, all Mme Sarraute's too, and above all Robbe-Grillet's and Butor's, and to see if, approaching these novels without any notions of whether they might be "old-fashioned" or "avant-garde", he doesn't find them among the strangest, most passionate, most gripping stories he has ever read. But there is a lesson here for writers: if they are going to explain themselves to their readers—surely a valuable and sometimes necessary thing to do—they should be very careful to avoid joining teams, recognising critical rules and movements, giving any countenance at all to the literary chariot-races organised by the professional critics.

IT MAY WELL BE, in any case, that the period of bitterly opposed factions is already over, that novelists are starting to put sides to middle, borrowing elements of naturalism, modernism, symbolism and even criticism with cheerful insouciance. In his new book of essays,[3] Malcolm Bradbury—himself both novelist and critic—

[2] *The Concept of the Avant-Garde*. By JOHN WEIGHTMAN. Alcove Press, £3.75.

[3] *Possibilities*. By MALCOLM BRADBURY. Oxford University Press, £3.50.

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suggests as much. True, he is not an impartial witness; he seems to hold much the same attitude towards the *nouveau roman* as Professor Weightman, calling it "dehumanised, *chosiste*" as though he too had failed to read Simon's or Sarraute's novels except through a cloud of Robbe-Grillet's theory. He also concentrates mostly on English and American novels and probably for that reason tends to equate humanity with liberal humanism. Nevertheless, for all he often appears to be no more than another advocate for naturalism (which he calls "realism"), he does make a genuine attempt to occupy the middle ground.

He reminds us, first, in an essay called "The Open Form", of the immensely varied history of the novel: "It runs from an extreme formalism, or elegant wholeness, to a contingency or looseness of narration; from romance to forms of high scepticism or high facticity; from aesthetics to documentation; from (to use Iris Murdoch's terms) crystalline forms to journalistic ones"; and he argues that at this particular moment in its history "in a good number of our writers there is a desire to resist formal wholeness." If I read the essay right, he is suggesting that the making of new fiction depends not on the continuous invention and development of new means of expression, but on the constant recycling of old means. Stated so baldly, this may sound suspicious: are we merely to read Nathalie Sarraute as if she was Dostoevsky or Rilke instead of as if she was Robbe-Grillet or Butor? But I don't think this is Professor Bradbury's point. He is really calling for a more empirical approach to all writers, whether of the "crystalline" or "journalistic" type, for an approach which would so far as possible release writers from their period and genre and would place less emphasis on the history of literature with its accompanying list of -isms, and more on the actual means deployed by each individual writer to support his fiction. In other words, he considers that novelists have more freedom of form at their disposal than, for instance, poets, and that critics should make some effort to appreciate the fact.

How then should critics go to work on a novel? In another essay, "The Novel and Its Poetics", Professor Bradbury proposes:

> that novels are distinguishable and have much in common with each other, even over an extended chronological period; that while they have no *typical* action (as does tragedy), there are typical compositional problems, recurrent practices, definable options; and that these characteristics are particular derivatives of their fictive nature, their character as prose, and their length, or epic dimension.

He proceeds to take both bulls—the bull of fiction as autonomous art and the bull of fiction as journalism—by the horns and, banging their heads together in the politest possible way, concludes that "while we must regard novels as verbal constructs, which they inescapably are, we must see what is constructed not alone as a self-sustaining entity but a species of persuasion—the writer handling material for the reader to engage him properly in the world of this once-and-for-all work."

I AM NOT ALTOGETHER convinced by the content of Professor Bradbury's argument. It seems to me rather too early in the history of the novel to be able to judge whether all the possible changes of form have yet been explored, whether, that is to say, Miss Brophy, Mme Sarraute, M. Robbe-Grillet and I are destined to be as put out by some unimaginable new fictional perception as Professors Weightman and Bradbury by the *nouveau roman*. It may be that contemporary novelists are simply swinging back like a pendulum from extreme crystallisation towards journalism, as Professor Bradbury detects; or it could be that they are going through a phase of retrenchment after the bold experiments of the first half of this century so as to experiment still more boldly in the future. Again, I think that Professor Bradbury's lack of sympathy with the non-naturalistic novel has led him to underrate the real adjust-

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ments critics have to make in their own thinking every time a new novelist of stature puts a bomb under their existing poetics. There is a distinction between the "experimental" writer like B. S. Johnson, who cuts a hole in his page or shuffles up a novel in a box, and the writer like Nathalie Sarraute, or perhaps Firbank, who entirely alters the fictional mode of perception. I don't think Professor Bradbury makes this distinction.

But I am attracted by his temperate tone of voice and by the fact that he offers at least a chance of reconciliation between the factions; and perhaps therefore a chance for the writers to be reappraised in terms of their fictions rather than their theories or the movements to which they have been assigned. "A species of persuasion" may not be a very exact definition of the novel, but it is surely a sane and restorative notion. The making of fiction of whatever type does come down in the end to establishing a rapport on some grounds or other with the reader. Criticism remains a personal matter between critic and writer. Do I like this novel or don't I? Do I like the person who wrote it or don't I? If I don't, is it my loss or his? After all, manning the barricades for one group of writers against another not only plays into the hands of professional critics but makes one feel distinctly uneasy: there are so many writers one doesn't like on the same side, and so many one does like on the other.

The Speckled Hill, the Plover's Shore

Northern Irish Poetry Today—By DOUGLAS DUNN

IN THE NORTH OF IRELAND, poets—most of them young—are faced with the cruel but interesting difficulties of realising their attitudes to violence and history. In a recent survey of contemporary Irish literature compiled by the French critic Serge Fauchereau, political topicality is elicited from poets in a series of interviews.[1] What emerges is that to be a poet in the country of Yeats is at the present time an embarrassment. Michael Longley talks of poetry being a force to be reckoned with, quoting with touching literary and political naïvety Shelley's remark about "unacknowledged legislators." But the edicts of poetic legislation are as violable as any other. If what Shelley said is true, then poetry clearly has a responsibility before and after, as well as during, the sway of violence. And in the Irish case, it would seem that prior legislation was a disaster, or on one side and not another.

Seamus Heaney, in his replies to M. Fauchereau, defends the unpartisan nature of poetry. Having been asked to write poems directly about the crisis, Heaney has been able to confirm to himself that his avowed way of writing is unsuitable for what his prompters want to see from him. Rather than be quiet, Heaney offers an alternative purpose for poetry in his introduction to a selection of new Irish poems.[2] This involves the uninteresting notion of "the retrieval of ancestry", but he goes on to say that poetry "can eventually make new feelings happen, and anybody can see that in this country for a long time to come a refinement of feelings will be more urgent than a re-framing of policies and constitutions."

Forgetting just how long is meant by "eventually", the problem of Heaney's position is that it raises the question "What feelings about what subjects will refine the feelings of society?" Such a poetry would have to be engineered, a propaganda at the service of benevolent reform and social goodness. For there is a great weight of poetry—tons and tons of it—which at no point in history I know of ever refined the feelings of anybody except those who already considered themselves so refined they were able to contemplate reading it. Yet Heaney's belief is admirable. He sees poetry as an *appeal*, and disregards the painful truth that in the world of our citizenry, plutocrats, aulic cabals, parliaments and revolutionaries, poetry is the perpetual lost cause, a multi-racial Confederacy, a republican Jacobitism.

Despite efforts by Heaney, Longley, Derek Mahon and James Simmons to disengage from subjects that don't suit them, one finds that the essential confrontation in their poems is not with present day realities, but with History. It is an almost personal relationship with History that makes it possible for John Montague to say to Fauchereau of violence: "*Moi, je crois qu'elle est nécessaire, même si moi je ne veux tuer personne. En Irlande du Nord, elle est nécessaire.*" If one was to ask Mr Montague "Why?", he wouldn't be able to answer. Historical process is, to Mr Montague, irrational and the work of what

[1] *Les Lettres Nouvelles*, March 1973: numéro spécial, "Ecrivains irlandais d'aujourd'hui", 15F.

[2] *Soundings*. Edited by SEAMUS HEANEY. Blackstaff Press (84 Wandsworth Road, Belfast BT4 3LW), £1.00.

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Longley calls "the malevolent *deus loci*." Ireland's past generally betrays him into accepting sentimental notions of human character. States of mind are made out to be racially inherent. He never gets himself away from "memory's mortmain", from a metaphysical Destiny, an overriding pessimism—

weaving towards
a new order
a new anarchy
always different
always the same.

In a poem called "The Source" he intuits the presence of "the ancient trout of wisdom" and the "bird of total meaning." Appeals to the unknowable give some indication of his restless search for historical satisfaction; he finds it suitable to endorse traditional mystical absolutes, a "dark permanence of ancient forms."

BRILLIANTLY ORGANISED, *The Rough Field*[3] involves the past in the present in more interesting ways than the simple recognition of a dispiriting continuity. The central regret of the book is that the opportunity has been lost in which Ireland's dilemmas could have been solved in terms of the country's essentially rural character. Country and City are, to John Montague, qualitative concepts. In the sixth poem of "Patriotic Suite", the "wild flaps of laundry in a thousand backyards," are written of as something spiritually hateful, "affronting eye and mind" as, he says, do council houses, docks, trains, bridges and "the antlike activity of cars."

Montague's simplistic refusal to come to terms with the nature of modern societies makes it inevitable that his historical and political interpretations be seen as suspect as well. Because he seems to *possess* History, he struggles through *The Rough Field* burdened with a colossal Nostalgia, a hopeless pastoral-political sentiment. In "The Sound of a Wound", he writes of

a lost (slow herds of cattle
roving over
soft meadows, dark bogland)
pastoral rhythm.

The disgruntlement of these lines is beautiful and contained. "Hymn to the New Omagh Road" is more vigorous, concrete, and persuasive—destruction of the countryside for the convenience of those who travel between towns is a good subject with which to be concerned. For Montague, however, it is

Our finally lost dream of man at home
in a rural setting.

[3] *The Rough Field.* By JOHN MONTAGUE. Dolmen Press: Oxford University Press, £1.25.

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Throughout *The Rough Field* Montague writes of repressed sexuality as a crucial factor in Ireland's disordered life. Realism and mysticism are his extremes. He is torn between the past and the present, between blood and breath, and it is in this way that his poems enact a fundamental Irish impasse. He writes of opposites in permanence.

MONTAGUE'S SCHEMATIC and ordered historical method is ambitious. Michael Longley,[4] however, gives the impression of not wanting to take History or politics too seriously, but at the same time admitting that he has a responsibility to subjects under his nose. In "Casualty" he shows himself to be as willing as Montague to fabricate a notion of the irrational-historical, and by so doing he abdicates the right to say whether contemporary events are good or bad. Like Montague, he appeals to an Unknown, a "something." All that's left of an animal cadaver that represents the body of Ireland are bones, horns and hooves—

And this no final reduction
For the ribs began to scatter,
The wool to move outward
As though hunger still worked there,

As though something that had followed
Fox and crow was desperate for
A last morsel and was
Other than the wind or rain.

As an imaginative climax, these lines are effective. One wonders, however, about the efficiency of the poem. It conjures up the official spectre of Ireland, elevating social realities into mysticism, into an excuse for the present. Longley and Montague both suppose themselves detectives from the Destiny they find frightening. Peter Porter has an image of poking fingers through the slits in a hoplite's helmet to frighten the cat. People can be frightened in the same way; and although one can see that poets might do this as a way of applying brakes to certain movements of feeling in their communities, in this case it does seem more like the old Celtic habit of believing in ghosts, in Montague's "dark permanence of ancient forms."

An Exploded View is usually concerned with a more recognisable version of life. Longley is a literary dandy and love poet. His most impressive gift is the natural ingenuity with which he can make images grow, construct careful narratives, and at the same time avoid an indulgence in decorative skills. As with Heaney or Derek Mahon, a different kind of talent to that needed by a poet who actually *wanted* to write poems about the North of Ireland's troubles can be seen in Longley's work. Their talents have been intruded on, and it is offensive to say that Northern Ireland offers them an important poetic challenge to which they ought to face up. It was, in any case something of a challenge before 1968. Longley's reaction to violence is simply one of helplessness before human suffering, as in "Wounds", his most topical poem. Longley makes the dead his "unrestricted Tenants", leaving "fingerprints everywhere, teethmarks on this and that." Public and private disturbance run through his book as individual affront. A poet in the North of Ireland is a non-combatant conscript, just like its citizens.

THE SHOWPIECES of *An Exploded View* are three verse letters to James Simmons, Derek Mahon and Seamus Heaney. In "the sick counties we call home", for a poet to "take his stand" is

Disinfecting with a purer air
That small subconscious cottage where
The Irish poet slams his door
On slow-worm, toad and adder. . . .

Tempting as that is, it does nothing to prevent

that day
We sleepwalk through a No Man's land
Lip-reading to an Orange Band.

What Longley wants is that

Mind open like a half-door
To the speckled hill, the plover's shore

which associates his sentiment with the pastoral nostalgia of Montague, although his view of Irish history, despite "Casualty", is contemptuous of heroics or racial tragedy. In "Altera Cithera", he approves of Sextus Propertius

Bringing to the ground
Like lovers Caesar,
Soldiers, politicians
And all the dreary
Epics of the muscle-bound.

Inveterately civilian attitudes are preferable to Montague's alarming historicism, with its leaps from fact into faith on the classic lines exposed by Camus in *The Myth of Sisyphus*. A sprinkling of European revolutionary awareness in Montague's poems makes lapses of that sort surprising. Longley is more literary. Being a poet is for him a cachet of eccentricity in a world of football supporters, "obstreperous bigfisted brothers" and "guilty suburbs." While he grieves for the casualties in humane and imaginative poems, he also wants to be "the last poet in Europe to find a rhyme." Longley is sustaining the value of poetry on its own terms; he undertakes the survival of his individuality, and the language which experience gives him. Not to do so would be to fall into silence, or to write *Tendenzpoesie*.

[4] *An Exploded View*. By MICHAEL LONGLEY. Gollancz, £2.00.

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DISENGAGEMENT from social realities can reach a point where it becomes callous and negative. History can be seen as inconvenient, nothing more than an interference with one's tennis or sunning in a deckchair.

> *Boring idealists are at it*
> *in the streets, police are shot and shoot.*

Contingency makes prose. That is both James Simmons's[5] method and sentiment:

> *Can a sheltered writer of poetry,*
> *sheltered by class and a teaching post*
> *at the University from the people*
> *he wants to serve, expect to have written*
> *songs for a new society? What nonsense!*

Nonsense, yes; but why did the writer allow himself to be "sheltered"? And if he knows he's sheltered, why not leave the teaching post?

When Simmons gets tuned up, his lines have the plangency of "Bagpipe Music":

> *So, won't you now step off the carousel?*
> *There's no alternative to intercourse.*
> *However scary or exasperating,*
> *Hating the buggers only makes them worse.*

While these lines have the virtue of truth, one reads the rest of Simmons's book longing for an imaginative insight, something to prove that he has more than opinions and a bad temper with which to project them as plain words inelegantly suspended over the unmetrical rise and fall of a doggerel formality. Simmons works from that dull and controversial quality, common sense. No doubt these lines will be applauded as accurate recognition of "facts." To me they are offensive:

> *When speakers dissipate their breath*
> *demanding basic inalienable rights*
> *I know we are in for a boring night*
> *and morning paper headlines of death.*

Why? The answer is that there are more than Simmons who feel that the whole business of demanding rights is contemptible and "boring."

Simmons's intention is to be *effective* rather than poetic; he is after poems that *hurt*, and he doesn't care what he has to do to get them. In his previous book, *Energy to Burn*, his subject was conjugality—the presbyterian word suits him—either clandestine or official, a territory which Longley calls "the great indoors." *The Long Summer Still to Come* has the same bite; but although harsh facts of domestic and married life are here as before, he distributes vitriol over a

[5] *The Long Summer Still to Come*. By JAMES SIMMONS. Blackstaff Press, £1.00.

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more public and political range. A state of mind formed by private experience is now directed at public events. One result of this is that he promotes his own counter-ideology of feelings about how life ought to be lived. Like Frank Sinatra, Simmons's message is "*My* way!" And his advice is suspect; his suburbanly bedroomised vision has its merits, but most of the time it's nothing more than provincial agony in which virtually everything is found "boring" or, as he says of Camus's mind, "bent." Nothing ever seems to live up to his hypothetical standard of normality. His writing denies imagination its rights, and language its sensuousness. His meaning is that the domestic must triumph above all else.

Although Simmons's poems are perversely on the side of life and personal happiness, his stance makes it necessary for him to be not only disrespectful to those he dislikes, but to anything larger than he is. Irish history is "farcical and painful" in his opinion. All history is painful, at least intermittently; but to associate farce with suffering is to degrade what might have been justified, and elevate what was vicious.

SEAMUS DEANE[6] avoids superficial negations, either in favour of the kind of specifics Simmons finds "boring"—

The unemployment in our bones
Erupting on our hands in stones;

or, more rewardingly, in favour of complex ironies and ambiguities. He frequently toys with lush and sophisticated styles, as if pointing out their uselessness at the same time as implying he would prefer to write more like Wallace Stevens than himself, faced as he is with the subject of Derry, where he comes from. Literacy and intelligence are embarrassments in killing times, and in "The Thirtieth Lie" he outshovels the slogans and intellectual props which he had "spat out, for years, like pap," reducing himself to an identity.

Deane writes of being "snared" by the past. He steps off a train at Derry and,

Once more I turn to greet
Ground that flees from my feet.

The place rejects him; he is not alienated by will. This imaginative idea, however, is as vague as Montague's mystified History, or Longley's "something." Elsewhere he writes of "the ghost that comes by the wall", a spectre of the past that marauds for vengeance. This is surprising in Deane's case, because the main drift in his poems is towards a hard-headed ambivalence about real issues. He is not afraid of feeling, but he wants to be accurate; at the same time, he is not afraid of intellect, but doesn't want it to get in the way: head guides heart. The excellence of his writing can be seen in these lines:

Now unless I feel
Attrition as our strategy,
I cannot edge nearer you.
Violence denatures
What once was fidelity.
Nor need this be wrong.
Look! The razors
Of the perception are now
So honed they cut
The lying throat of song.

Important as it is that a man should continue to write well while the society he comes from erupts, Deane's poems are particularly interesting in that they are about what violence does to people. His most powerful theme is the intrusion of violence on love, while there are frequent suggestions that violence is itself created by a lack of love, by loneliness, as well as public repression. Much of his writing is still more literary than it need be, which could also be said of Longley. Literary artifice does seem in this context like a haven from realism—although on such difficult subjects realism is often the haunt of mediocrity.

[6] *Gradual Wars.* By SEAMUS DEANE. Irish University Press, £1.00.

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A BRIGHT YOUNG POET, Paul Muldoon[7] (b.1951) imagines an extension of feelings and wants "to look without commitment into another eye." That line suggests what a concerned poet should be aiming for. Muldoon's awareness and love of Irish landscape and history is as palpable as Montague's, although when he writes about the countryside he lacks Longley's ability to transform natural lore into hard and beautiful words.

Muldoon has the advantage of his generation. He can begin by seeing his individuality as something of value:

> *In the way most of the wind*
> *Happens where there are trees,*
>
> *Most of the world is centred*
> *About ourselves.*

In "Identities" Audenesque items such as "the interior" and "the past régime" crop up in a poem about lovers ill-matched because of a clash of religious and political differences thought sacrosanct by their elders. It ends with a significant Irish metaphor, the beauty which had been seen in nature now jaundiced by human insistencies:

> *I have been wandering since, back up the streams*
> *That had once flowed simply one into the other,*
> *One taking the other's name.*

By expressing the impossibility of marriage through an imaginative alteration of the facts of rivers, Muldoon makes a tentative connection with the rural vision which is Montague's concern. But Muldoon moralises the landscape whereas Montague historicised it, saw it as a potent relic. And in this case Muldoon's heavily worn technique is permissible. For what he asserts is that the beauty of the landscape is not at one with those who suffer in it, the opposite of which is a central imaginative idea in Montague's poems, and perhaps in Longley and Heaney as well. Most Irish poems tend to imply that landscape and people are one, both controlled by a predestined History. Irish history, like Scottish history, encourages this. Sentiment sees these histories as a tragedy of landmarks and battlefields, names associated with fire and flame and treachery and the endings of eras. Simplicities of that sort, while often beautiful, poetic, moving, and convenient, are also static. Sentimentality is hand in glove with an irrational principle of history.

In one of two poems ostensibly about American Indians—"The Year of the Sloes"—Muldoon ends with a conciliatory image which seeps through the poem's exotic setting:

> *In the Moon*
> *Of the Trees Popping, two snails*
> *Glittered over a dead Indian.*
> *I realised that if his brothers*
> *Could be persuaded to lie still,*
> *One beside the other*
> *Right across the Great Plains,*
> *Then perhaps something of this original*
> *Beauty would be retained.*

These lines are satisfying. Through them one sees Muldoon create an imaginative but possible facsimile of reconciliation out of his own individual obsession.

Idealism is not necessarily what a contemporary poet should be expressing. Humanity, however, is always positive, whether it takes the form of Longley's indignation in "Wounds", or in the thoughtfulness of Deane's poems. Montague attempted to restore his heritage to himself, an effort of mind and feeling which he deliberately and movingly proved to have been mistaken. Yet he never let go of the past. A sense of what *was* works ineffectively in his poems as a way of feeling about what is actually happening in Ireland. Longley continually impresses the reader with regret, not only for the pain and death circumstances force him to witness, but with distaste at

[7] *New Weather*. By PAUL MULDOON. Faber & Faber, £1.80.

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having a responsibility to get unwelcome subjects into his poems. Like Heaney and the rest, he has no wish to be read as a "Baedeker of the nightmare ground," and he's right. This might also explain why Muldoon disguises his contemporary moral in such an exotic surrogate as Red Indian lore.

In his poem "As It Should Be", Derek Mahon imagines the Spectre of Irish History hunted down and shot,

> *Between ten sleeping lorries*
> *And an electricity generator.*

Without it, poems will be more difficult to write, with no easy mythology to fall back on. But

> *Since his tide-burial during school hours*
> *Our kiddies have known no bad dreams.*
> *Their cries echo lightly along the coast.*
> *This is as it should be.*
> *They will thank us for it when they grow up*
> *To a world with method in it.*

"Method" is probably ironic, and the poem appears to have its doubts as well as its hopes. But what a poet ought to be writing about is the world "as it should be" from a knowledge of having taken part in the world as it is. One could claim that as the political responsibility of a poet. No one, however, is obliged to be a political poet. The best protest of all is to write with style, for that's exceptional. And the interest of contemporary poems from the North of Ireland is that they are written with acute literary understanding and flair, with imagination, and a refusal to be sidetracked from the value of language by what, to the political and unpoetic, seem "necessities."

Bad Language

New Novels—By JONATHAN RABAN

OF BOTH HIMSELF and of Hugh Selwyn Mauberley—that unhappy, ruined figure of the artist drowning in the *philistia* of modern society—Pound wrote: "His true Penelope was Flaubert." There have been greater writers in the past than Flaubert, but there is no dead novelist who seems as close, as intimately knowable, as sympathetic to our own concerns, as the furious, gloating, delighted compiler of the *Dictionary of Idées Reçues*, the chronicler of the bourgeois crazes of Bouvard and Pécuchet, the biographer, at once loving and disgusted, of Emma Bovary. Flaubert has taught one kind of 20th-century writer how to survive. He lived in a society just as crass and vulgar as anything in the TV advertisements or *The Observer's* "Who's Who in the Arts Today" and miraculously transformed all that he most hated and despised into art. He delighted in the awfulness of a language corrupted and staled by bourgeois usage; he digested shoddy heaps of encyclopedias of popular knowledge; he could look on the solemn, silly, sententious burghers of Rouen with the terrible affection of a man squinting down a telescopic sight, his finger gentling the trigger. *Bouvard et Pécuchet* is all but untranslatable, so saturated is it in clichés and old saws; Flaubert believed it his masterpiece—it was a complete inventory of the dim and pompous world of the provincial bourgeoisie, uniquely endowed with the luminous perfection of comic form. Driven by rage and contempt, Flaubert scrupulously narrowed a flood of feeling into an intense jet of deadly attention. He turned Art—that polite bourgeois soporific—into a weapon of destruction. He died as angrily as he wrote, bitterly joking that Emma Bovary would live while his ruined body would rot. The life he hated was having the last laugh, and Flaubert was too fair-minded an ironist to deny it its final cackle.

To move from Flaubert to Philip Roth may seem to bring us down with rather a bump, but the old novelist haunts the younger like a demon. Roth writes as if he was possessed. He has set himself up as the Flaubert of middle America, and, driven and confused, he has got hopelessly entangled in his vocation. Looking back, his course seems now both clear and ruinous. In *Goodbye, Columbus* he was led, in the second half of the novel, into a delicious demolition of the vulgarities of the Patimkin family. In *Letting Go* he tried applying the eloquent ironic patterns of the Jamesian novel to a messy panorama of life in modern Chicago, and found, not unpredictably, that life was sadly wanting. In *When She Was Good,* he did a mid-western rewrite of *Madame Bovary*; crucifying poor Lucy Bassart, the girl with aspirations beyond her station, on the cross of ranch-style bungalows, dinerettes and amateur photography. In *Portnoy's Complaint*—which I think is his best book so far—he set a nice Jewish boy from New York City adrift on Huckleberry Finn's old route down the river of American life, and the voyage turned out to

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consist mostly of wanking. In *Our Gang* he wrote a whole book in the flatulent, corrupted language of modern American politics; and in *The Breast* he turned, very wittily, nastily and largely unrecognisedly, on Associate Professors of Lit. and Humanities (a breed almost as numerous as Flaubert's bourgeoisie) who harbour such a deep and *critical* love of Great Books that they discover, to their great inconvenience, that they are living them out.

All Roth's work is tinged with the professorial. He uses the literature of the past as if it was there to be winked and nodded at knowingly and deliberately. He scatters clues to his intentions with self-conscious deference and subtlety, like clever footnotes. See also F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*, H. James, *Portrait of a Lady*, compare and contrast Ch. 4. . . . A detailed reading of any one of his novels shows him playing with quotations rather as Eliot did in *The Waste Land;* he is, as the graduate students say, very strong on the subtext. An American friend calls him "vintage Iowa Creative Writing School", and the phrase does carry some weight. Roth tends to sound terribly pleased with his own writing. You can feel him smirking at you at paragraph-ends. But he is still the best rhetorician in sight; his anger is real; his energy enormous. The trouble is that he has chosen, like Flaubert, to write in bad language, to become a trash-artist knitting novels in the cheap pink wool of the vulgar vernaculars of modern America. Unlike Flaubert, Roth is impatient, lacking in scruples, falls carelessly short of perfection. His novels, far from being triumphs of form, are slack and untidy, hurled at the reader with a contemptuous sneer. *Art*-lover? Your just deserts!

THE GREAT AMERICAN NOVEL[1] is a disaster that might have been a masterpiece. "Call me Smitty," says the narrator, introducing himself with a leer at Melville's ghost. Ishmael only escaped to tell the tale; in Roth's novel, the last survivor, literature's sole heir, is a nonagenarian sports writer called "Word" Smith, author of the syndicated baseball column, "One Man's Opinion." Smitty's unpublishable epic—his attempt at a mid-20th-century answer to *The Scarlet Letter, Moby Dick* and *Huckleberry Finn*—is a drivelling, alliterative, jargon-ridden chronicle of the doings of two of the worst baseball teams in America during the Second World War, the Ruppert Mundys and the Tri-City Greenbacks. With names drawn at random from world mythology, like Skirnir,

[1] *The Great American Novel.* By PHILIP ROTH. Cape, £2.95.

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Astarte, Baal and Demeter, haunted by the crooked, all-American Gil Gamesh, once tyrant-king of Uruk in Babylon, the teams are made up of cripples, dwarfs, mutants and half-wits.

Their failures break all baseball records, as between them they enact a maniacal travesty of American history and literature. There are moments of explicit satire (as when Bob Yamm, "the midget's midget", renounces his career in a speech of heartrending corn over the radio—Nixon's "Checkers" declaration to the life), some obvious literary parallels, most of them subject to thorough exegesis by Smitty in his very funny prologue, desultory games with names and events. But this is a thumb-nose allegory, more a matter of tone than of direct reference. Its aim is to reduce America to a mish-mash of mythology, grotesquerie and ill-written, overblown or sentimental rhetoric. It tries to be the kind of novel America deserves—a book bad enough to match the violent philistine nightmare of real life.

That, of course, is where Roth fatally parts company with his ghost. *Bouvard et Pécuchet* was a beautiful book written in a bad language; *The Great American Novel* is an ugly book written in an ugly language. Its intentions are transparent, and admirable, but actually reading it is like spending five or six hours immersed in the Sports Section, punctuated by reminders of what Roth *could* do if he bothered. Between pages 150 and 160 there is sandwiched one of the most scabrously brilliant passages of Roth's writing I have ever read: an account of a trip to the "pink-'n-' blue light" district of Kakoola on Euphrates Avenue, where the whores play "mommy" to pinned and diapered G.I.s. The cradle of civilisation, corner of Tigris and Euphrates, turns out to be fifteen dollars' worth of bathing, towelling, and being tucked up in bed in a clean nappy. Here the dialogue sings, and Roth cloaks his fury behind a brilliant rhetorical impersonation as he speaks the "mommy's" lines for her. The home life of Roland Agni, the boy pinch-hitter whose parents don't want him to grow up conceited and pay the worst team in the League to keep him down, is another, regrettably short, stretch of Roth breaking free of Smitty's wooden sub-Hemingwayese. But for the most part Roth is content to doodle, facetiously deadpan:

> Scattered applause as Bud ran from the Reaper dugout waving his mitt at the stands. From the steps of the visitors' dugout, the Mundys looked on in awe at Buddy all in home team white. How like a bride he seemed to them in their own tattered road uniforms of gray! Jolly Cholly, the kindest coach who ever lived, flashed the V for Victory sign—"Good luck, kid!" he called, and Parusha was all at once washed over with an emotion so strong, so engulfing, that he even felt it in his missing limb.

Quoted out of context, this passage reads more sharply than if one has already endured two hundred pages or so of identical writing. The pastiche is always accurate, there is always a sting of savagery or absurdity every few sentences, and the baseball lore—rendered in such technical detail that most British readers will find a large portion of the book quite incomprehensible—takes on a surreal poetic life of its own. As an encyclopedia of jokes about cripples, midgets and Jews, *The Great American Novel* can make a reasonable claim to being the standard work.

But beside Flaubert and Swift—and Roth's grand destructive strategies necessarily invite these belittling comparisons—it is a noisome squib. Like Barth's grossly overrated *Sot-Weed Factor*, it is a novel in which the writer diverts himself at the expense of the reader, without making these diversions sufficiently rich or splendid for it to be worth the reader's while to jump over his own shoulder and participate vicariously in the author's pleasure. M. Bouvard and M. Pécuchet would have found *Bouvard et Pécuchet* tasteless, sterile and silly, I imagine; it would certainly have been conspicuously lacking in "art." Roth is a superbly able and intelligent writer—and there are few enough novelists who could carry off the sustained ironic parody which makes *The Great American Novel* so epically tedious. We must not be Bouvards. But at the same time we have a right to point out that mere immersion in the ghastly farce of life and a brilliant talent for mimicking its most vulgar and hideous manifestations do not in themselves qualify a novel for greatness. We may not deserve shapeliness, control, subtle management and refinement, but if Roth was as fine a writer as the sum of his parts might suggest, he would grant us these things out of grace. In *The Great American Novel* he is playing it mean, triumphantly dealing out badness to a lousy audience. Concluding his initial address to the reader, Smitty remarks: "As we say so succinctly in America, to the unfit, the failed, the floundering

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and forgotten, HIT THE ROAD, YA BUMS!" To which the reader has an inalienable right to reply: Hit the road yaself, and quit wasting my time. This is not the generally recommended way of talking to one of the best writers of the day, but Roth has, most unfortunately, got into such a shouting match with his readers that some of us are going to have to start shouting back.

FLAUBERT ELEVATED aesthetics into a theology; for him Form was close to Grace—it explained and made bearable an utterly corrupted world. Graham Greene, one might say, has elevated a theology into aesthetics. In many ways his problems are very close to those of Flaubert, or Roth: his books are populated by people who are so dulled, so morally inert, so sated by the careless habit of sin, that they have very nearly ceased to exist as characters in the moral drama of life, or the novel. At least the besetting vulgarity of America, which is the grit in Philip Roth's oyster, is lively enough—it fills ball-parks and hamburger joints and throws out Smitties like cans of beans off a production line. But Greene has to work with a world which appears to bore him almost as much as it must bore God. He writes about sinners, but is constitutionally incapable of being surprised by sin. His eye broods, he sees, he is wearied by it all—these petty rehearsals of pride and vain idealism and carnality which he has recorded so many times before that their chronicling is hardly more than automatic writing, the desultory shorthand of the Ouija board.

His new book, *The Honorary Consul*,[2] is set in Limbo—a metaphysical state cleverly disguised as a provincial river port up a creek in Argentina. Its streets are oddly empty: between the deserted Italian Club, with its unvaried menu of Hungarian goulash, and Senora Sanchez's brothel, there are no stray people. The time is always set between dusk and the hallucinatory small hours. The town's only distinction is its unspecified "Jesuit ruins." The identities of individual characters ("souls" would be the more accurate term) adhere to them, if at all, only lightly. Charles Q. Fortnum, the honorary consul, is absentmindedly referred to as "Mason"; an ex-priest turned into a married guerrilla fighter is still called "Father"; Fortnum's wife, whom he romantically rescued from Senora Sanchez's establishment, stubbornly continues to treat her husband with the submissive grace of a whore servicing a client. Dead souls are ageless, and everyone in the novel, whatever their technical age, is possessed of a terrible resignation and knowingness—the grey air of cynical pensioners of life. Greene's Marlow, the half-English, half-Argentinian Doctor Eduardo Plarr, is, we are told, in his thirties: one's disbelief in that fact, as one listens to his inner, world-weary brooding, is its own point. He is a professional consultant on human decay—and in Greene's world that means he is almost a novelist. There is a real novelist in the book too; the solitary, neglected, industrious Doctor Saavedra, who produces a novel a year in celebration of Argentinian *machismo*. But death lags sadly behind art. At Senora Sanchez's, he is anxious to continue a conversation about literature with Plarr, but:

> Teresa pulled him by the hand. He rose reluctantly and followed her to where the candle burnt below her statue of the Avila saint. The door closed on them. A novelist's work, he had once said sadly to Doctor Plarr, is never finished.

That is a perfect—rather annoyingly self-conscious—emblem of Greene's own position in his book. He too steps reluctantly, knowing too well what will happen, into the closed booth where sin and sainthood blasphemously commingle.

But if the novelist's manner is tired to the point of deliberate self-parody, the events in the novel are full of proud human frenzy. The

[2] *The Honorary Consul*. By GRAHAM GREENE. Bodley Head, £2.00.

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honorary consul is kidnapped, mistaken—once again—for the much more important personage of the American ambassador. There are adulterous thrashings between soiled sheets; a tumult of vain sparks of private hope and innocent radical idealism; an arduous catalogue of meals relished and drinks swilled; a shoot-out; and, at the end, the funeral of the hapless Plarr—another case of bunglers getting the wrong man—while his child stirs in the belly of Fortnum's wife. One could hardly have more "life", more evidence of heads and bodies strenuously engaged in the activity of survival. But Greene is not fooled by any of this; he can smell the mortality in the soul of the most amply certificated insurance-risk.

THROUGHOUT THE NOVEL, the dialogue rings like an antiphonal chant. The minor characters are all Spanish-speakers, and Greene's formal, dying-fall rendering of their language in an English of solemn purity gets deeply into the texture of the whole novel. He has written the book in the idiom of a religious ritual; and as readers we come to understand that we are attending an ancient and familiar ceremony, a kind of requiem mass. The numerous back-references to his own previous fiction, and his air of continually half-quoting himself, endow Greene with the authority of a priest making a rapid, formal exegesis of holy writ. For him, truth and boredom are closely intertwined. There was a time when he could be transfixed by evil, when Pinky could amaze him by the sheer, cunning depth of his unthinking amorality. But now, one feels, the most spectacular sinner would only arouse Greene's bored pity, and the kind of affectionate irritation which comes from being able to predict a person's every next move. There are many people who can appreciate, and even love, Greene's writing without subscribing to his theology; I have to admit that my own disbelief in the theology makes me run from the novels. *The Honorary Consul*, more than any other novel by him, with the possible exception of *The End of the Affair*, seems to me a work of religious totalitarianism. Its manner and its message are in perfect harmony, and I fear and dislike both.

THE EYE OF THE STORM,[3] Patrick White's new muscle-bound epic, is, alas, another case of art transcending life in an act of literary vengeance. It is all power and scope; the characters have a Tolstoyan breadth and boldness. The novel's presiding presence is a bedridden Australian *grande dame* called Mrs Hunter, a lady with a cantankerously majestic manner and a tendency to enuresis. Her children—an hysterical and ravaged princess and a slyly vain actor-knight—gather round her bedside, along with the family solicitor and the household staff, to enact a drama with the broad outlines of *King Lear*, garnished with echoes from *Oedipus Tyrannus* and *Tales of the Outback*. White's prose is, as always, lavish and abundant; an oratorical writing, full of sweep and rich imagery, close in tone to Carlyle at his most abandoned:

> Breathing deeply, still automatically snipping by spasms at the air, she regained the grass verge, her basket of spoils heavy on her arm. Poured in steadily increasing draughts through the surrounding trees, the light translated the heap of passive roseflesh back into dew, light, pure colour. It might have saddened her to think her own dichotomy of earthbound flesh and aspiring spirit could never be resolved so logically if footsteps along the pavement had not begun breaking into her trance of roses.

One feels the syntax burdened to the point of dissolution under the sheer weight of vocabulary which it has to carry. The stately-plump sentences roll by in a panorama of poetic sensations; but where did the life go? The characters are oddly thin, almost invisible. Though White *says* more than any novelist alive, he never actually tells one the details which might bring a character or situation into sharp focus. Instead, he seems relentlessly bent on obliterating his society with language. Every page of the book is plastered thick with words, behind which reality escapes with the dismal hiss of a flattening tyre. One is left only with the impression of a banal grandeur of execution, helpless before a work of monumental architecture, glad to be away.

[3] *The Eye of the Storm*. By PATRICK WHITE. Cape, £2.95.

Spilt milk

A milk bottle, toppled from a sill
By a girl on stilts leaning before
She pushes off on her new-found legs,
Shatters. She keeps the equilibrium
That the bottle had, and, hands cupping
The supports, treads on distant rubber pads
Through the splinters, on the verge of tears.

Christopher Pilling

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INTERVIEW

Raymond Aron

HISTORY, philosophy, politics, sociology, economics—you like to be concerned with all of it. What have you really been up to? A quoi ça sert, *Raymond Aron?*

ARON: How can I answer without falling into the trap either of hypocritical false modesty or ostentatious and exaggerated self-satisfaction? What good am I? Perhaps I ought to quote to you a dedication which I received from a young man of the Left: "To Raymond Aron, thanks to whom the word 'liberal' is still respectable." In fact I am tempted to say that among an intelligentsia which has become 80% Marxianised, I may be rendering some service to those independent spirits who can say: "There is at least one intellectual whom no one quite thinks a fool, who undoubtedly knows Marx much better than the majority of the Left and who, nevertheless, has not been converted. . . ."

Yet I sometimes think that I ought never to have left the university and that I ought to have been content to write a certain number of books on philosophy, very different from those which I have written. One day I think this, and then the next day I say to myself that if I have written innumerable articles and books dealing with present-day affairs, the reason probably is that I felt a deep personal need to do so. And why not satisfy aspirations which may appear contradictory but which nevertheless exist side by side in one human being?

—Everyone agrees that you are an acute analyst of problems and dilemmas. Some of your critics, however, accuse you of never having put forward solutions.

ARON: To a certain extent I agree. Over-acute perception of the different facets of a problem and a desire never to evade any of the difficulties may ultimately paralyse creative thought. Those who change the world are the dreamers and the poets. To this extent I admit (paraphrasing Marx's famous remark) that I am a man who interprets the world rather than changes it.

Yet I regard the criticism which is often made of me—that I do not take up a stand—as unfair. When really great issues have been at stake, when situations have arisen in which, politically or existentially, it was vital to be on one side or the other, I think that I have taken a far firmer stand than most of my contemporaries. When, for instance, we were faced with the problems of Hitlerism, of the war and resistance, of Stalinism, of Algeria, and of May 1968, I never took refuge behind cold and neutral analysis.

—You have never been tempted to become adviser to the Prince, a "Machiavelli" or a kind of French Kissinger?

ARON: Anyone interested in politics always dreams of being a man of action. Of course I would have liked to be on terms of friendship and confidence with someone in power, to discuss problems with him freely and to put forward to him the possible solutions which you suspect me to be incapable of formulating.

If this situation has never arisen, the fault is mostly my own. My passion for analysis has led me to criticise almost everyone in politics, even including those who, in general terms, think as I do. I have never been able to stop myself writing what I think and, oddly enough, although I write in moderate terms, it frequently happens that I do so in a wounding way or at least in a way considered irritating. Whenever someone is in power my relations with him soon become soured.

—You evidently vex them before they turn to you?

ARON: *Voilà*. Moreover, it is no part of my way of intellectual life to ask for interviews with a President of the Republic or a Prime Minister. On the two or three occasions when I went to see statesmen, I had something to say to them which I thought really important. When M. Edgar Faure, for instance, was trying to settle matters in Morocco I did my best behind the scenes to help him.

—During your lifetime you have, nevertheless, met many politicians. You have also met philosophers, writers, and historians. Whom have you most admired?

ARON: I will tell you quite frankly. I have had opportunity—and for this reason I do not ultimately regret having left the field of philosophy—to meet a large number of people of differing circles. What invariably struck me is that the

RAYMOND ARON'S *recent contributions to* ENCOUNTER *include "The Quest for Meaning" (September 1972), "A Conversation with Ota Silk" (March 1971), "An Interview" (November 1970) and "Of Passions & Polemics" (May 1970). Among his books are "The Opium of the Intellectuals" (1957), "Main Currents of Sociological Thought" (1965) and "Peace & War" (1967).*

The present interview was conducted by the Editors of "L'Express" (Paris).

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qualities which go to make up a personality differ profoundly between differing spheres of human activity. Take, for instance, General de Gaulle whom, after all, I met frequently and with whom I talked fairly often. What struck me was not any outstanding mental quality but, so to speak his *presence*, the air of human authority radiated by his personality. One felt that he had the ability to assert himself by his will-power and the force of his language. He radiated that sense of power and authority which go into the making of truly historical personalities.

One of the most intelligent men I have met, perhaps *the* most intelligent, is quite unknown—Alexandre Kojève. Before the war he lectured at the *École pratique des hautes Études* on the phenomenology of the mind. He published a book on the subject entitled "*Introduction à lecture de Hegel*" and it was an important work. His lectures exerted a profound influence on post-War French philosophy. Kojève gave me the impression of genius. In later life he spent twenty-five years as a civil servant in the Ministry of Economic Affairs, where he was the *eminence grise* of French negotiations. The solutions he proposed were invariably interesting, sometimes brilliant, but they were not always those adopted.

Naturally I have been very close to André Malraux, who impressed me both by his gifts and by his deeds. I would rather not talk about him today, nor about Sartre, of whom I saw a great deal at the *École Normale*. During my arguments with Sartre, and Simone de Beauvoir has reported them, I was often quite definitely right. Even then, however, I realised that his was the creative spirit.

—Among all the people you have known, whom have you least admired, those who seemed to you the most wrong in their thinking?

ARON: The most striking example is Marcel Déat. His brilliant mind led him to faultless reasoning, but the final conclusions were all wrong. On the day he joined the German camp in July 1940 I said to myself: "We've won."

—You yourself have a passion for faultless reasoning.

ARON: But I have extremely strong convictions. And I also have a philosophy of history and of politics which implies that one considers each problem separately, that one does not deduce the desirable solution from a body of first principles laid down once and for all. For instance, I was not systematically, or radically, or fundamentally opposed to a French Algeria. But by 1955 I was convinced that, in view of what we had done in Algeria and of the world setting in which France and Algeria had to be viewed, the only solution was to accept the evolution of Algeria towards independence. In 1957, moreover, I was the first to write a popular pamphlet indicating that independence was the only possible solution.

Moreover, I loathe tyranny and I loathe occupation régimes. As you can imagine, in the early 1940s I had no particular affection for the Germans. Yet when I spent a few days in the French occupation zone in the late '40s, I found the atmosphere intolerable, as I did when I spent some time in Tunisia during the period of protectorate.

—In short you are a liberal?

ARON: If you like, I am a liberal, although I am tired of hearing this equivocal word used on every possible occasion. I like a spirit of openness and equality between men.

YOUR LATEST BOOK "République imperiale" *deals with twenty-five years of American politics. Why "Republic" and why "imperial"?*

ARON: Montesquieu wrote that a republic could not make conquests without becoming corrupted. In fact I wished the word "republic" to be taken in the sense intended by Montesquieu: a state where all are citizens and the rulers are chosen by the people. The United States answers to this description. It also exercises an imperial function, however, since it is responsible for the security of a large number of allies and visualises a certain type of world order.

Naturally I deliberately avoided using the word "imperialist." Present-day readers are obsessed by the Leninist interpretation of the word "imperialism." If, therefore, I had called my book "*République imperialiste*" everyone would immediately have thought that I was indicting the American role in the world. All I ask is to be allowed to differentiate between the various aspects of this role in different parts of the world. To take a simple example, I refuse to call the American presence in Europe imperialist because American troops are stationed in Europe at the request and with the authorisation of legal governments. When General de Gaulle asked the American troops to evacuate their bases in France, they did so.

—You have said that the devaluation of the dollar and Richard Nixon's visit to Peking constitute decisive points in American policy. Why?

ARON: I do in fact think that Nixon's first term marked a turning point in American foreign policy. This is the first time that an American President has behaved according to the traditional rules of what I call the "controlled Machiavellianism of European cabinets." Nixon—who of course is advised by Henry Kissinger, a professor

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of international relations with a European-American background—has been more successful than all his predecessors in instituting a dialogue with Moscow.

—Yet all American presidents since Roosevelt, with the possible exception of Truman, have wanted to start this dialogue.

ARON: Nixon has been original only in that he has succeeded. Why? Because he had the courage to make the visit to Peking.

—It did, in fact, require a certain courage to realise that it was in the interest of the United States, not to inflame the Sino-Soviet conflict but to hold the balance evenly between the two great Communist rivals.

ARON: Steady now. The break between the United States and Communist China was an accident due to a faulty interpretation by Washington of the origins of the Korean war. Today it is known with near-certainty that the Korean adventure was the outcome of decision by Stalin much more than by Mao Tse-tung. It is also known that the American government was proposing to recognise the Peking government at the moment when the Korean campaign opened. To many observers the Korean campaign looked like the start of a military offensive by the entire Communist world.

The Soviet Union took some trouble to inflame the quarrel between the United States and Communist China. The result was that Communist China was put in quarantine for a long period, prolonged by the facts that a further accident happened, the Viet Nam war. This postponed the inevitable by about ten years when in fact the schism between Moscow and Peking, starting in 1960, ought to have moved things forward.

I would, therefore, not go so far as you suggest. I would simply say that Nixon has had the intellectual merit and the moral courage to do what common sense—or, if you prefer it, traditional Machiavellianism—prescribed.

—At the outset Richard Nixon seemed a most unlikely American politician to bury the hatchet with Peking.

ARON: This is a very French reaction. It is the political genius of the Anglo-Americans to arrange that reforms are brought about by conservatives and that an East–West conflict or Cold War crusade becomes one between Moscow and Peking. In addition Nixon is far more intelligent than the European or American intellectuals happen to think. Even before his election he had set out the necessity of a *rapprochement* with China in an article published in the periodical *Foreign Affairs*.

—Henry Kissinger was not yet then his adviser?

ARON: As far as I know the man who convinced Nixon of the necessity of a *rapprochement* with Peking was Elliot Richardson, who became Secretary of Defence and later the Attorney-General.

—Some people say today that the United States wishes to divest itself of part of its world-wide responsibilities. Others, on the contrary, consider that she is only interested in cost-sharing. What is your view?

ARON: In the nuclear age enemies have a major interest in not making war on each other. Hence the idea that rivalry should take place under such conditions that the risk of an explosion is reduced to the minimum. Indubitably all Americans, from the extreme Right to the extreme Left, are saying in unison: Never another Viet Nam. But they said the same after the Korean war—never another Korea. This is the logical, natural and reasonable reaction to the disappointments, the bitterness and the national crisis caused by an unpopular war, which was impossible to win and difficult to justify. I wonder whether the Americans really wish to create, both in Europe and in Asia, a framework, a balance, in which they would not be directly involved. If the question had been put in these terms to Henry Kissinger while he was a professor at Harvard, he would certainly have replied in the affirmative. Kissinger is an old personal friend of mine, and I know very well that he thought it desirable for Europe and Japan to have a substantial defence capability, with the United States playing only the role of supreme arbiter. The difficulty is that this theory is incompatible with the doctrine of non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, which remains the official U.S. doctrine.

—You do not, therefore, think that the Americans might be tempted to a genuine division of responsibilities?

ARON: I do not quite see how it is possible to leave the allied nations without the means of replying to nuclear blackmail and at the same time hand over to them full responsibility for their defence. I would add that I see no sign of the Europeans being willing to take upon themselves the expenditure necessary for their own defence.

TURNING to the financial aspect: do you think that Nixon is trying to preserve a world role for the dollar or that, on the contrary, he considers the dollar's function as a reserve currency to be an expensive encumbrance?

ARON: How ironical history can be! Men invariably set themselves objectives but, more often than not, they achieve unforeseen results. When, in 1944, the United States, by order of

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the Secretary of the Treasury, promised convertibility between the dollar and gold (thus laying the foundations of what became the Bretton Woods system), I am convinced that neither they nor the Europeans had any conception of what the situation would be fifteen years after the end of the War. Books and articles on the shortage of dollars or the so-called "dollar gap" were published up to the very day when people began expatiating on the United States' balance-of-payments deficit!

—Over the last three years this deficit has increased to such an extent that the phenomenon seems once more to have changed in nature.

ARON: I think one must differentiate between three periods. First, there was the period of the Marshall Plan and its extensions lasting until 1958 or 1959. This was characterised by a very moderate deficit in the U.S. balance of payments, of the order of a thousand million dollars per year. At the time this was considered a desirable method of redistributing the world currency reserves, and in particular the gold accumulated by the Federal Reserve Bank.

A new awareness of the problem dates from 1960. But at that time the Americans were still selling abroad more than they were buying. The deficit in the balance of payments seemed to be due to the costs of U.S. overseas policies and movements of long-term capital (manifesting themselves abroad either in the buying up of businesses or the formation of subsidies).

Then came the decisive period, beginning in 1966. At that time the Viet Nam war gave rise to a process of inflation in the U.S.A. and the external deficit continued to increase until, by 1970, it had reached colossal figures. In 1971 the trade balance in its turn became adverse: America was buying more than she was selling abroad. At that moment the United States was forced to sever the existing relationship between gold and the dollar.

—Since that time Europe's dependence vis-à-vis the dollar has become even greater than in the past.

ARON: For a long time the Gaullist government

Letter to the Soviet Ambassador

H.E. Nikolai M. Lunkov,
13 Kensington Palace Gardens,
London, W.8.

YOUR EXCELLENCY,

I am writing to express my deep concern at the recent trend of events in the Soviet Union, and at the effect that this has not only upon the individuals directly involved but upon the relationship between your country and mine. I do not write in any representative capacity (though I do believe that my concern is shared by the overwhelming majority of my countrymen) nor, primarily, as a politician, but as one who has himself been a writer and who is keenly interested in the welfare of writers and intellectuals throughout the world.

As you will be aware, I have myself devoted considerable efforts to improving and extending relations between the Soviet Union and the United Kingdom. During my period as Secretary of State for Education and Science considerable progress was made in promoting educational and cultural exchanges between our two countries, and as President of the Board of Trade I actively sought to enlarge Anglo-Soviet trade. In both capacities I visited the Soviet Union and had friendly and constructive talks with several leading Soviet Ministers.

The Government of which I was a member actively sought to achieve a détente *between the Soviet Union and the Western alliance, and the Labour Party has continued to press for improved relations since we went into Opposition in 1970. The Labour Government, and myself personally, were encouraged in these initiatives, and found it easier to commend them to British public opinion, by the evidence that a greater respect for civil rights was being shown in the Soviet Union than in the Stalinist period, and that the excesses of that period were, at least on occasion, officially condemned by Soviet spokesmen. Although there were many aspects of the Soviet system which we personally found unacceptable, we were at least able to believe that it was evolving in a direction more in accord with the Socialist and Democratic sentiments officially proclaimed by the leaders of your country. We believed, and still fervently desire, that the physical and psychological barriers inhibiting close and friendly relations between Soviet and British citizens would gradually be broken down.*

IT HAS COME AS A SHOCK *to many of us that the favourable trend which we discerned has not continued, and that oppressive actions have been perpetrated against Soviet citizens, many of them writers and intellectuals, some of them of Jewish origin, which have been reminiscent of the darkest days of Stalinist, and indeed of Tsarist tyranny. Much of the evidence of this oppression has, inevitably, been based on unofficial reports, because of the severe restrictions on free reporting in the Soviet Union, but even if only official Soviet reports are taken into account an appalling picture of crude coercion emerges.*

Among many aspects which I personally find deeply disturbing are the following:

1. The "cat and mouse" treatment of Mr Andrey Amalrik, who after serving a three-year sentence in a labour camp for "circulating anti-Soviet fabrications" was immediately re-arrested and sentenced in a secret trial in July to a further three years for "slandering the Soviet state."

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believed that if the dollar could be undermined, the result would be greater monetary and economic independence for France. Unfortunately, precisely the opposite was the truth. The so-called defeat of the dollar merely aggravated the difficulties for the Europeans.

—Does the United States really want reform of the system?

ARON: The answer—and it is not an Irish one—is that the Americans would like, at one and the same time, to keep the privileges but divest themselves of the burdens of being a reserve currency. They want to have their cake and eat it. On the one hand, they want their currency to remain valuable and to be used all over the world. On the other hand, they no longer wish to be hamstrung in their choice of rate of exchange; they wish to be able to devalue the dollar as freely as the French have devalued the franc or the British the pound.

—But the counterpart to this freedom to devalue the dollar is that fewer and fewer people will tend to draw up their contracts in dollars.

ARON: Unless firms which carry out purchases or sales can "cover" themselves immediately, in other words have available a short-term market for all currencies.

—Is that possible?

ARON: We are in a situation which I believe to be completely unprecedented. The European and Atlantic economies are interwoven to such an extent that it is extremely difficult to separate them. As some American economist once said: "Once you've made an omelette, you can't ever again have the separate eggs. . . ."

—If the United States does not readjust its balance of payments and if the dollar continues to depreciate in relation to other currencies, it will be essential to find another more stable and more neutral standard.

ARON: This partially explains the fact that America is now taking seriously the problem of her balance of payments and, even more, of her trade balance. Having said this, after the second devaluation it is possible that the American

——*from C. A. R. Crosland*

2. The statement by Mr Pyotr Yakir that among the "illegal activities" of which he and Mr Viktor Krassin were accused was that "we had meetings with foreigners." None of the activities of which either Mr Amalrik or Mr Yakir and Mr Krassin was accused would have brought them within a mile of criminal charges in any democratic Western country.
3. The "McCarthyite" campaign against Mr Alexander Solzhenitsyn and Dr Andrey Sakharov, in which workers and fellow intellectuals, who have had no opportunity of reading their statements in the Soviet press, have subscribed to apparently spontaneous condemnations of them. The many petty harassments to which Mr Solzhenitsyn has been subjected place contemporary Soviet society in a very odd light. For example, I know of no other country in the world, apart from South Africa, where internal restrictions are placed upon the towns and areas in which citizens are permitted to live.

The genius and achievements of Mr Solzhenitsyn and Dr Sakharov are part of the glory of Russia, and could be seen as reflecting greatly to the credit of the Soviet state; instead of which no opportunity appears to be lost of treating them as pariahs and as enemies of the country to which both of them have contributed outstanding service in war and peace.

I ASK YOU TO CONVEY *to your Government the abhorrence which I feel at these and many other examples of oppression against Soviet citizens, and my deep conviction that the unbridled activities of the K.G.B. are not only an appalling threat to the liberties of individuals but are endangering the policy objectives of the Soviet Union through the world.*

The last two or three years have seen encouraging progress towards better relations between the Soviet Union and the West—the signing of the Russo-German Treaty, the SALT talks and the opening of the European Security Conference. I recognise that much of the initiative for these developments has come from your Government, and that Soviet Ministers rightly believe that it is in their interest for this détente *to continue.*

But a necessary condition for real progress to be made is for Western governments and peoples to believe in the benign intentions of the Soviet Government and for them to be given hard evidence that international agreements to which the Soviet Union adheres (such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights) are solemnly observed in practice.

I can conceive of no action by your Government which would create more goodwill for the Soviet Union in the West than a decisive affirmation that the civil rights of Soviet citizens are inviolable. A modest—yet extremely welcome—gesture in this direction would be the immediate release of Messrs Amalrik, Yakir and Krassin, and the termination of all harassment against Messrs Solzhenitsyn and Sakharov.

If your Government really does desire friendly and harmonious relations with the West this is the path it must take, and if it does it will not find democratic Socialists in the West slow to respond.

Yours sincerely,

Anthony Crosland

(RT. HON. C. A. R. CROSLAND, M.P.)

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currency is under-valued and the authorities certainly do not envisage another devaluation.

—It must be admitted that the Americans have something to complain about. In ten years Japanese and European exports to the United States have increased by over 500% and over 300% respectively. In return American exports to Europe and Japan have only increased by 130%.

ARON: One must realise that the U.S. balance-of-payments deficit is also due to movements of capital. It seems to me legitimate to help America restore an approximate trade balance; equally, however, it seems to me arguable whether one should grant the U.S.A. the privilege which they demand of having a favourable trade balance, thus allowing them to continue to finance the installation of their industries abroad.

—This movement abroad is also opposed by the American trade unions.

ARON: Yes, but for dubious reasons. The American trade unions say that multi-national enterprises reduce employment at home by setting up subsidiaries outside the United States. This is not certain. Spokesmen for the multi-national firms emphasise that at least one-third of American industrial exports is accounted for by deliveries from parent companies to their subsidiaries.

—Do you think that expansion of multi-national firms will reduce American exports of goods?

ARON: I do not know, and no one knows. Take the simplest and most striking case, that of I.B.M. Spokesmen for this firm emphasise that, thanks to its network of subsidiaries abroad, I.B.M. in the United States can export world-wide a large quantity of semi-finished products of all sorts. How can one tell what share of the world market I.B.M. in the United States would have had if the company had not set up subsidiaries in the rest of the world? It is probable that, if I.B.M. had not manufactured its computers in Europe, the European countries would have taken steps against the invasion of their market and formed companies for the manufacture of computers which would have been larger than those which exist today. I.B.M., however, would have captured some part of the foreign market and would not have been content merely to deliver semi-finished products. So it seems to me impossible to decide.

—And what of the future? Do you think that the U.S. will increase or decrease her exports of capital?

ARON: I think that a country whose currency is still flowing all over the world is not compelled to restrict its exports of capital. Despite everything, one finds it hard to think that the major changes in monetary parities which have taken place in the last two years will not eventually make American investment abroad less attractive, if only because these changes reduce the disparity between American wages and European wages.

—Wages in Germany have, in fact, become very much like those in America.

ARON: Logically, therefore, there should be a tendency towards reduction of the export of American capital, at least to Europe. Having said this, I am not altogether convinced that these mechanisms will work either automatically or rapidly. There is a structural difference between a Continental economy in which the majority of firms do not think of exports because their home market is already considerable, and the smaller countries which are apt to consider exports as the prerequisite for growth.

The contrast between these two lines of thought brings me back to one of my favourite notions. It is that the U.S.A. reacts like an "island-Continent", in other words like a country which, at least since the early 19th century, has never been surrounded by neighbours of her own size and for a long time has never known the feeling that invasion might come tomorrow. The fact that a country like this, which has never felt dependent upon anyone, should today for the first time be forced to take account of the state of her balance of payments, amounts almost to a revolution.

—Will the economic difficulties which may arise among allies make the development of trade with the East more attractive, particularly for the U.S.A.? In other words do you think that the world will remain divided between two markets, or that there will be mutual penetration between them?

ARON: I do not see any possibility of mutual penetration between these two markets in the near future. The reason is the basic difference in outlook as regards external trade on the part of the Soviet world and the West.

—Russia, however, has a great need and a great desire for American technology.

ARON: Yes, but the Soviet Union only envisaged a series of once-for-all operations. She is interested in buying a complete factory, with keys to the front gate. Once the factory has been built, that's the end of it.

—Couldn't this process go further?

ARON: In the present phase the Soviet Union wants to buy two sorts of products from the United States—food items, and the products of advanced technology. These exchanges will amount to a substantial sum. But in the present

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state of affairs I do not see the Soviet Union opening her frontiers to a Western-type exchange. In other words she will not allow the Soviet consumer freedom of choice—say, in so far as a car is concerned, between a Zis and a Fiat, a Peugeot, a Mercedes or a General Motors vehicle. It must not be forgotten that this type of transaction is a basic feature of industrial trading within the Western world. When the consumer does not choose his product, the firm chooses its supplier; Fiat, for instance, has a contract with Michelin for delivery of a certain percentage of Michelin tyres. This type of exchange is the basis of the European and Atlantic world's economic integration. It is the outcome of a concept foreign to the founders of the Soviet Union and is still foreign today to the planners in Moscow.

—You do not, therefore, think that, in the foreseeable future, American trade with the Soviet Union could be an important factor in the U.S. trade balance?

ARON: No, apart from the possibility (which today I still think improbable) of a massive purchase of energy. If eventually the Americans find that it is cheaper to purchase gas from Siberia, liquefy it, transport it to the U.S.A. and turn it back into gas, rather than to use other sources of energy, then perhaps they will conclude a vast contract for the purchase of gas. In return they would provide the resources to exploit the gas fields.

—Despite its size such a contract, in your view, would be analogous to a "once-for-all" operation?

ARON: Yes.

—You therefore consider Samuel Pisar's theory that a form of "mutual penetration" of the economies is in the longer or shorter term inevitable to be improbable?

ARON: If you allow yourself an indefinite timescale, everything is possible. There are some phenomena, not very many, which point in the direction of Pisar's theory which I would call optimistic. Certain multi-national firms, for instance, are beginning to set up subsidiaries in countries with so-called socialist régimes (Yugoslavia, for example). These subsidiaries have obtained a guarantee of non-nationalisation. Moreover if, as I believe, the export of American capital will largely follow the search for low wages, the logic of economics would lead to the establishment of subsidiaries in Eastern Europe.

—As an additional advantage they would benefit from "social peace."

ARON: They would have both low wages and social peace. Nevertheless I believe that, for the moment at any rate, there are fairly strict limits to the possibilities of mutual penetration between Western markets and Soviet-type markets.

LISTENING TO YOU, nothing much seems to have changed in the world. Yet just now you were talking of great turning-points.

ARON: In the first place there has been the arrival in the White House of the first President with a concept of international diplomacy in the accepted European sense of the word. He has substituted a dialogue with all countries for the attitude of confrontation which had prevailed for the preceding twenty-five years. As a result of this "new diplomacy" the U.S.A. succeeded in extracting herself from Viet Nam under conditions compatible with what Nixon had called "an honourable peace."

Secondly, in the SALT agreements the Americans have officially accepted nuclear parity with the Soviet Union. This is a considerable change since the U.S.A. had maintained an obvious superiority for twenty-five years.

Thirdly, the Great Powers, while recognising that their interests conflict, equally recognise their overriding interest in avoidance of fighting each other and, in so far as is possible, settlement of local disputes with the minimum of force.

Fourthly, after the Viet Nam War, the U.S.A. displayed increased determination not to allow herself to be dragged into limited wars. It would seem that Richard Nixon would not be opposed to the possible arrival of a Communist party in power in this or that country of the world, even in Latin America.

Fifthly, the international monetary system, which was centred on the dollar, is in process of transformation. The U.S. government is trying of course, to preserve some of the advantages given to it by the previous system; but it wishes to ensure that the dollar enjoys the same freedom as other currencies. It is, therefore, refusing to accept some of the old obligations and responsibilities.

All this leads me to say that the quarter-of-a-century of American predominance is coming to an end.

—This new world is taking shape in three series of negotiations—military, monetary, and commercial. Which are the most important in your view?

ARON: At the top level, in other words the strategic level, the military negotiations are taking place between the United States and the Soviet Union. So far the Europeans have been kept informed but have taken no active part. I do not think that this has given rise to any great bitterness

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in Western Europe, nor do I think that it has resulted in any decrease in Western European security. Europeans do not feel that, in the present phase at least, the Soviet Union visualises exerting military pressure on Western Europe. I am struck by the semi-indifference shown by West Europeans in regard to the strategic negotiations. The newspapers do no more than devote an article to them from time to time.

On the other hand, rightly or wrongly, Europeans do feel that the Americans are using a sort of blackmail on the subject of the withdrawal of their troops located on our continent. There is therefore a link, much disliked by the Europeans —and particularly by the Germans who are very anxious to keep as many American troops as possible on the territory of the Federal Republic —between this aspect of the military negotiations and the commercial or monetary negotiations.

—Do you think that the result of these negotiations will be a greater measure of independence for Europe or that, on the contrary, the United States will maintain or even reinforce what you have called their "imperial" zone?

ARON: The latter is more likely because the Europeans exhibit no wish to exist in such "independence."

—You say that in a tone of regret?

ARON: Yes. An American friend recently said to me: "It is impossible for us to find anyone to talk to in Europe who is interested in India or in relations between China and Japan. . . ." This is sadly true. Today Europeans are only looking inwards on themselves, so much so that, even if they contrive to restrict American supremacy in so far as trade and currency are concerned, Europe will not thereby become a political power. Existence as a political power postulates the creation of a common or directive agency and this cannot be created unless there is, as a starting point, a desire for political existence.

—And in your view there is no such desire?

ARON: If there were, it would be seen, I think, in the field of defence. But the Europeans obstinately refuse to assume responsibility for their own defence. They use two arguments. The first is that they do not feel threatened. The second is that, if they were threatened, only

Culture & the Détente

ANOTHER POLITICAL trial has taken place in Moscow, and apparently it is intended to be the start of a series. The accused were prepared to confess. Their "confessions" provide material for possible accusations against others—possibly Sakharov, Solzhenitsyn, and friends.

Why is it that when criticism is voiced within their realm, the Soviet government and the all-powerful Communist Party (the two are really the same) think of nothing else but to revert to the methods of Stalinism? Why is it that, fifty years after the October Revolution, the government of the Soviet Union is still afraid to vouchsafe to its citizens a bare minimum of critical self-expression? Why is it not proud of Alexander Solzhenitsyn, an excellent writer whose work has continued the great tradition of Russian narrative literature? Is Soviet society incapable of any basic reform because it is confined in the straitjacket of Leninism-Stalinism?

I ask these questions as one who has welcomed the policy of détente, and has supported it for years. A policy of détente, however, cannot mean that we will be filling our briefcases full of trade treaties, while to avoid upsetting this superficial "relaxation of tensions" we timorously hold our tongues when crass injustice is perpetrated.

Undoubtedly some measure of progress takes place in the world when the bosses of Western private capitalism meet the bosses of Eastern state capitalism over Crimean champagne or German hock. The policy of détente, however, was surely not launched with such great effort in order to give total priority to East-West horse-trading. A more important purpose was the reciprocal enlargement of the area of freedom, a possibility of greater exchange of information, and the abandonment of the old Cold War's grim "Friend-Enemy" ideology.

IT IS NOT AS IF we wanted to impose parliamentary democracy on the Soviet Union or to require the Russians to return to private capitalism. At the same time, no one can presume to make it a condition that we abandon our basic democratic principles. Realisation of the differences between the two social systems—and an agreement to entertain mutual respect for them—should not mean that criticism is simply ruled out. For both systems are eminently criticisable—our own with its capitalistic abuses and social injustices, the communist system with its lack of tolerance and regard for the views of its own citizens.

The détente policy is facing its first crisis, and it is certainly not the last of its troubles. This is no reason for the opponents of this policy to rejoice and start reburnishing the old weapons of the Cold

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nuclear weapons could afford them protection. These arguments or excuses may be worth something, but the fact remains that I do not think that Western Europe as it is, divided as it is, is about to assume responsibility for its own protection.

—How do you explain the existence of an imperial policy on the part of the United States and absence of an imperial policy on the part of Europe?

ARON: I think that you are putting both an abstract and a topical question. Consider the sequence of events. When Roosevelt was discussing with Stalin in Yalta, he said: "I do not think that American troops can remain in Europe more than two years after the end of hostilities." We are now in 1973, in other words 28 years later, and American troops are still in Europe. Just as a man can go into the future backwards, so the United States has pursued an imperial policy because, in 1947, the Europeans begged them to provide protection and aid.

You will remember that at that time there was a process of Sovietisation going on in Eastern Europe evidenced by spectacular executions, not only of those who collaborated with the Germans but also of those who had resisted the Germans in the name of Western ideas. Rightly or wrongly the Europeans were afraid. In a speech at the United Nations Paul-Henri Spaak, the Belgian Minister for Foreign Affairs, said to Vishinsky: "We are afraid." Today we can say that he was wrong to be afraid, which is easy with hindsight. But at the same time he was indeed afraid.

—But the Americans have not remained in Europe solely out of altruism?

ARON: Of course it is not simply out of generosity. I do not much like looking for motives on the part of a country. It leads to all sorts of arbitrary ideas. The Americans, being what they are, have a political, moral and economic interest in not finding themselves isolated in a closed and collectivised world. I think, therefore, that they have an obvious interest in maintaining a Western Europe which belongs to the same type of civilisation as their own.

—And this civilisation—is tending to what?

ARON: Ever since the catchword of Growth has ruled the minds and even the conduct of statesmen I have always thought, like all who ponder these matters, that it could only be a temporary phase of human history. On the other hand, I also think that the Common Market's ideas on "limitations of growth", in the form in which they are presented, are based on false calculations and can lead only to pseudo-solutions. If a government were to say: "We are not interested in producing more", I think that the mass of people would think, not that it had realised the necessity to search for a different type of civilisation, but that this was a case of the "Haves" being indifferent to the plight of those who are still "Have-nots."

—The recent election campaign in France made much of such unequal distribution of national income.

ARON: There are two different subjects here; one is new and the other well-worn. The new one is that certain decisions taken by the State are being called in question, decisions which have cost considerable sums of money for a return considered derisory. The most spectacular example is the *Concorde* which will one day be howled down by everyone except those who are working on it. The other subject is an old one, the unequal distribution of wealth.

—But there are certain old subjects which remain valid.

ARON: If you compare the scale of incomes of 1850, starting with the street-sweeper and ending with the senior civil servant, you will find that the present gap is considerably less than it was a century ago. But if you compare the scale of incomes in present-day French firms and the

War. The West German government should always remember that, at the last elections, the majority of its citizens voted for the continuation of the détente policy initiated by the Socialist-Liberal coalition, and they did so because they expected from it more than mere agreeable economic agreements.

Cultural policy must not provide the field in which all the diplomatic compromises can be made. An international football match in Moscow, however much it may contribute to relaxation of tension, cannot detract from the fact that fresh political trials are being prepared, so reminiscent of the terror of the Stalinist era in their cynicism and contempt for the individual. A policy of détente cannot be an invitation to pussy-footing. Even if we can give no direct assistance to the harassed writers, intellectuals, and scientists, we cannot just be silent spectators.

THE GOVERNMENT OF THE SOVIET UNION *should realise that, if it revives the terror of a past period in its history, it is damaging the image of its country and thereby the effectiveness of its new initiatives. Any reversion to the old weapons of the Cold War will inhibit progress in the Security Conference and endanger the policy of East-West détente. More than that, a socialism which disregards human rights is self-defeating and, as the past has proved, will only serve to prepare the way for a right-wing reaction.*

Günter Grass

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same scale in most of the neighbouring countries, you will find that the spectrum of salaries and wages is far wider in France than in the majority of countries which have reached the same level of development.

There are various reasons for this inequality. One is the notorious imperfections of the French taxation system. In France, moreover, there are extreme differences (within the industrial sector) between efficient and inefficient concerns. A third factor is that agricultural prices, which have been artificially raised, favour the efficient producers but do not allow marginal producers to live under decent conditions. The fourth factor (allied to taxation) is that our estate-duty system is incredibly unfair in the light of our ideas of justice.

WHAT are your own personal plans?

ARON: I have just finished a book on the dialectics of force, *La dialectique de la violence*. It is the first of a series of three books which I intend to devote to the philosophy of history, to action in history, and to the philosophy of action. Moreover, I have become fascinated by Clausewitz, whom everyone talks about but whom no one has read, so much so that I have just written "*Clausewitz en son temps et aujourd'hui*." It is my hobby-horse, *mon violon d'Ingres*.

—How many books have you now written?

ARON: A good twenty or so but "totals" are deceptive. Surely a writer—and also his readers—must differentiate between one book and another.

A Knight, Trouvaille

To keep the paper tight I seal
him in. This place seems airless.
The image is not proud. Now
and then a gleam comes through

the cloud, but he has no window
near. It is difficult to feel the line
and several times, with crayon poised,
I've wavered by the head:

in knowing that this brass is fine
I cannot chance my arm.
Then lying down to see
what angles can reveal, I think

there is the faintest smile,
at which I stand to paddle him
in stockinged feet, a tip from
an enthusiast that seemed absurd.

Yet there he is in hollows,
not a mark to spoil the curls,
the delicate complexity of mail,
the stars, the stance among the flowers.

David Day

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AUTHORS & CRITICS

A Retort to King & Blaug

The Arts Council & Its Critics

By Richard Findlater

IT SEEMS TO ME bizarre that, although the Arts Council of Great Britain is now nearly 30 years old, no comprehensive critical assessment of its work throughout the arts has, to my knowledge, yet been published: nothing beyond sections in specialists' books (e.g. in John Elsom's *Theatre Outside London*), and the customary press comments on each year's annual report, half-reverential, half-reproachful, seldom long enough to make more than a couple of complaints about the proliferation of cultural activities subsidised and encouraged by one of the most valuable (and misunderstood) British inventions of the century. All the more astonishing, then, to find in ENCOUNTER an article—somewhat misleadingly dubbed "an inquiry into public patronage of the arts"—asserting that the Council's work can't be evaluated. Why not? Because its objectives are "too ill-defined to make evaluation possible"; and this is "proved" by the annual reports. To read these is "depressing", say Karen King and Mark Blaug, because the Council has never produced in them "a single coherent and operational statement of their aims." Yet, in the course of their "inquiry," King and Blaug have apparently read very little else; and there is no "evidence" that they have seen any of the work which the Council actually does, as distinct from the words that are published under its name once a year.

One flaw of the curious King-Blaug exercise is that they seem to view the reports as the work of a single author, whose tactical evasions and true intentions (if not his real identity) will be revealed by textual and linguistic scholarship. They pounce gleefully on "inconsistencies" between reports twenty years apart, unearthing contradictions and incompletions, unravelling strands of wool with scornful titters. But they wilfully ignore the political facts of life: notably, that the operational tone and outlook of the Council (including what it sees, corporately, in the mirror) are inevitably influenced—like all committees—by the personality of its chairman, and—like all part-time public boards—by the work-style of its full-time executives (although, at the same time, it is its difference from other boards and committees which gives its role in the arts especial significance, for better or worse).

King and Blaug fail—among other failures—to allow for the dissimilarities of succeeding chairmen: Lords Clark, Cottesloe and Goodman were as different in office as chalk from at least six different varieties of cheese, not only in personality but in their changing views of the Council's function and the chairman's role in that function. What's more, King and Blaug don't even mention the secretary-general, the executive boss of the Council's day-to-day operations and the man who usually writes the reports with which the authors of the ENCOUNTER inquiry are so obsessed. The differences (and the similarities) between Sir William Williams, Nigel Abercrombie and Sir Hugh Willatt, and the shifts in the balance of power between them, their chairmen and their Ministers, are a vital part of any practical assessment of the Council's first quarter-century. Such an evaluation must also take into account the changing impact on Council policy of Westminster and Whitehall, which have, at the least, confirmed its empiricism and its reluctance to codify practice in explicit verbal formulae; and it should recognise the influence of the relationship between the Council in all its avatars and the hundreds of boards and trusts on its pay-roll which are, like the Council itself, committees of part-time volunteers.

AGAIN, KING AND BLAUG omit, in scrutinising the annual reports, to note the change in attitudes towards the arts (and their patronage) during the period under their examination. To plead the case for public patronage in the 1970s is, they suggest, flogging a dead horse, *not* a cost-effective occupation; but in the 1950s, when Sir William wrote a series of reports outlining that case in clear and persuasive prose, the need for investment in the arts on anything but a token scale was far from self-evident in town halls, constituency-party caucuses and conferences of municipal officials or trade unionists. Some of us doubt whether it is self-evident now.

But perhaps the most absurd of the omissions from the King and Blaug "inquiry" is the question of money: it is upon the size of the annual grant, not upon the phrasing of its annual report, that the Arts Council's work depends. It has never had anything like enough cash to cope with the enormous backlog of need and the rapid expansion of demand, a process accelerated by its own injections of money (however tiny) and its role in reorganisation, training and advice, revaluing attitudes among those in and under authority. What use would it have been in 1945, with a

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budget of under £250,000, to declare a precise series of targets? In 1973, with over 50 times as much to spend, there may be more reason to expect a formulation of principle; but it is futile to deplore, in retrospect, the absence of such formulations in the past, as if the right words could make up for the wrong budget. And, what's more, for the absence of appetite, and goodwill, and allies, all of which have grown with with the grant. Why *should* the Council have decided, for instance, that its "basic aim" was *either* to gain new audiences *or* to support new artists? Why not try to do *both*? Which is what the Council has done.

THE MOST GLARING ODDITY of King and Blaug's inquiry is that they never drag their eyes away from the imperfect prose of those reports to look at the deeds, rather than the words, of an institution which has shown itself in action, if not in declarations of principle, dedicated to the *ad hoc* initiative and the empirical response. True, the authors pay perfunctory tribute to the Council. "Without doubt", they say, it is "fulfilling a vital role"; it "would be absurd to underestimate the contribution it has made to cultural activities"; and "that it has been successful in achieving the goal of raising artistic standards is almost obvious from the esteem in which British drama, music, ballet and opera is held throughout the world." And all this has been achieved without the enunciation of precise aims and cost-effective priorities? Who'd have thought it. Not King and Blaug, it seems. Yet it isn't only a question of standards, but of quantity, too: look at the increase in the number of repertory theatres (and the virtual disappearance of weekly rep); in the volume of opera and ballet seen throughout the country, not only in London; in the number of travelling art exhibitions, orchestras, music ensembles. . . . You can find a lot of these facts by careful reading of the annual reports; although the Council still does not tell us often enough and clearly enough *what* it is doing. Which is another matter.

Apart from the actual music, drama, ballet, opera, etc. which owes its performance—and sometimes its creation—to the Council's patronage, it has one major negative achievement to its credit. It has not imposed institutions on the arts. Nor has it imposed theories—theories of what arts are more important than others; of what principles should govern public subsidy; of what artists should be subsidised in preference to others. It has made choices, inevitably, with which many people quarrel. That it has not made them to the accompanying fanfare of manifestos is, in my view, a cause for rejoicing not complaint. The Council has many faults of omission and commission to weigh against its virtues, a balancing act which must be performed by any more factual inquiry than that of King and Blaug; but these faults do not include the failure to lay down the tablets of the law from 4 St James's Square or 105 Piccadilly. Any tablets are bound to be broken: all manifestos are likely to seem inadequate—at the current rate of change—by the time, at least, that a new chairman, a new Minister or a new secretary-general has arrived.

IN COPING AS AN INSTITUTION with cultural change in a democratic society, the readiness is —well, nearly all. Corporately considered, the Arts Council has known quite well, most of the time, what it has been doing; not least, in refraining from a running commentary on why it is doing it. For that reticence no moral glory or superior wisdom should be claimed, any more than it should be regarded, *à la* King and Blaug, as a sign of moral cowardice and intellectual confusion. It is in the nature of the beast. However they differ in other respects, English committees are bound to compromise, intellectually; they don't dictate and they can't prescribe; they are incapable of inaugurating a consistent ideology, consistently and cost-effectively applied. For me, that's a saving grace, if the relative—if diminishing—freedoms of the arts are not to suffer further interference from the state.

A Reply

SHORTLY AFTER the appearance of our iconoclastic essay on the Arts Council's declared aims and objectives (ENCOUNTER, September) Sir Hugh Willatt, Secretary-General of the Council, told a reporter:

> "The article is an attempt to judge the Arts Council without assessing the results of the Arts Council's work. It is a criticism of our public statements and ignores what we've done." (*The Guardian*, 21 August 1973)

Sir Hugh is quite correct. We limited ourselves explicitly to the Council's public statements as *a first step* in an effort to evaluate the Council's accomplishments as public patron of the Arts. We will turn to what the Council has done in a forthcoming piece, and we hope eventually to be judged in the round and not simply on our preliminary skirmishes in the field.

Mr Richard Findlater in this issue echoes Sir Hugh's reaction. But he goes further in denying that we have done justice to what the Council has said, after which he cannot resist the temptation of implying that published pronouncements do not really matter; results are everything. As we have said, we intend to move on to results in the near future but, in the meanwhile, Mr Findlater

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has raised so many red herrings that an immediate response is in order.

"One flaw of the curious King-Blaug exercise", he writes, "is that they seem to view the reports as the work of a single author, whose tactical evasions and true intentions . . . will be revealed by textual and linguistic scholarship." It is perfectly true that the reports in question span a period of 20 years which saw the Council headed by five successive chairmen. But as a matter of fact, there are glaring inconsistencies in the public statements of the Council within the lifetime of a single chairman. *e.g.* the statements on the ultimate value of the Council's activities (p. 8). On the other hand, certain positions were steadfastly maintained despite changes in the chairmanship of the Council, not to mention the identity of the secretary-general: *e.g.* the policy of refusing to support jazz between 1946 and 1969 (p. 14). Quibbling apart, our exercise in what Mr Findlater chooses to call "textual and linguistic scholarship"—otherwise known as "actually bothering to read what publicly accountable bodies are forced to publish"—has demonstrated that the Arts Council is indeed committed to a definite set of objectives in terms of which it hopes presumably to be judged. This was far from obvious when we began our investigation; and it is still not obvious to many observers of the Arts. Mr Findlater, for example, concedes that the size of the Council's annual grant in 1973 does warrant "a formulation of principles", but he questions the need for such principles in past years when the annual grant was much smaller. Unfortunately, the Council does not share his strange theory of financial management. The Council's clearest statement of aims appeared in the 11th Annual Report of 1955–56. Mr Findlater simply has not read the annual reports carefully enough.

When Mr Findlater turns to deeds instead of words, he is overwhelmed by the quantitative and qualitative advances in the Arts in this country since the War, all of which he credits to the Arts Council, complaining only that "the Council still does not tell us often and clearly enough *what* it is doing." Mr Findlater thinks it is pointless to ask *why* the Council is doing what it is doing, and he is not sure precisely *what* it is doing. With friends like Mr Findlater, the Council hardly needs enemies.

Like Mr Findlater, we believe that public bodies should ultimately be judged by results but results cannot be assessed without a knowledge of intentions. If it is wrong to try to discover the intentions of a public body like the Arts Council by a careful reading of their official reports, why are such reports published at all and, by the way, published at subsidised prices?

Professor Bauer's letter (p. 94) runs in a different vein, and there is space to deal with only one of his three major points. He argues that there is excess demand for Covent Garden, etc., at current subsidised prices, so that attendance would not necessarily decline if the subsidies were withdrawn. Furthermore, the beneficiaries of the subsidies are "very small numbers of people among whom the modish, the foreign visitors, and the relatively well-to-do are rather disproportionately represented." However, there is a real difficulty here which he may not have faced. If ticket prices were raised in response to a withdrawal of Arts Council support, the composition of audiences would be even more heavily biased in favour of the tourist and the rich. Now, it is one of the declared aims of the Arts Council to win new audiences for the Arts, particularly among the young and the working class. Besides, many of us (rightly or wrongly) would object to seeing the Arts distributed solely in relation to purchasing power. The current compromise is to subsidise on the plausible notion that the "time to queue" is more equally distributed among the population than income available to purchase tickets. The trouble is that an excess demand for artificially cheapened ticket prices results not only in queues but also in black markets for tickets; and, of course, a black market favours the well-to-do. The present compromise, therefore, is far from successful in achieving the aim of subsidising the poor rather than the rich.

The answer, it seems to us, is to subsidise *consumers*, not producers, and in any case to subsidise *selectively* rather than universally. It is possible, to some extent, to identify desirable target groups (like students and trade union members) by means of ticket vouchers distributed through organisations representing these target groups. (The East Germans, the Swedes, and our own Northern Regional Arts Association have experimented with such vouchers). Alternatively, it is possible to subsidise events such as "Proms", which are specifically designed to attract members of these target groups.

It is not easy to think of a perfect solution to the problem, but it is very easy to think of solutions that go much further than anything we have tried in this country. But if we are serious about changing the nature of audiences for the Arts, our first task is to find out much more than we know about who attends what, not to mention the response of audiences to the actual level and pattern of ticket prices. Our principal indictment of the Arts Council is that they have largely neglected the job of fact-finding in these areas. We hope shortly to substantiate this assertion.

Karen King & Mark Blaug

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LETTERS

Gershwin's Analysis

IN CONNECTION with Henry Miller's "Of Drugs and Theory" [ENCOUNTER, September] one important correction should be made. He referred in passing to the story that George Gershwin's psycho-analyst may not have been "medically qualified, and able or incompetent to distinguish an emotional disturbance from a brain tumour."

It happens I knew Gershwin's analyst—Dr Ernst Simmel, a distinguished refugee M.D. with vast experience in medical clinics and hospitals. I once asked him about the rumours (then rife in Hollywood) about his failure to suspect that Gershwin might have a brain tumour. Dr Simmel sighed, "How *does* one ever put to rest such a rumour? The fact is that soon after he came to me for treatment, I sent Mr Gershwin for a thorough series of neurological tests, at Mount Sinai Hospital, by one of the leading neurologists in America. I also advised brain examination. All tests were taken—and proved negative. Months later, again disturbed by certain symptoms, I urged a second examination. Again, this was done. Again, all neurological and brain-analysis findings proved negative. . . ."

It is not always simple or visible (at least it was not in the late 1930s) to catch brain abnormalities in their early states.

LEO ROSTEN

New York City.

Public Patronage of the Arts

PROFESSOR BLAUG'S and Miss King's examination of the activities and reports of the Arts Council [ENCOUNTER, September 1973] is timely and welcome. When public expenditure is huge and largely unrestrained, the spending of a mere £35 million a year is small. But as they say, it raises widely pertinent issues of public patronage and of the assessment of its costs and benefits, and (it may be added) of political influence on cultural life. As is evident from their article, Blaug and King are well qualified to address themselves to such matters. I hope that they will return to the subject; and in particular that they will develop further three topics on which they have already touched in their essay or which are clearly implied in it.

1. Blaug and King observe correctly that the attendance figures at Covent Garden and Stratford-on-Avon conflict with some remarks by the Arts Council that higher attendance rates would make it possible to reduce subsidies or even to eliminate them. Their case is stronger than they imply. For many of the performances at these subsidised theatres the demand for seats far exceeds the supply. This is evident from the high re-sale value of tickets; from the need for long advance bookings; from the issue of queueing tickets for which there are often queues. (Some years ago a Metropolitan Police notice prohibited the forming of queues at Covent Garden more than 24 hours before the beginning of the booking period.) Higher prices for these seats would not, therefore, reduce attendances at these performances. Thus some of these subsidies go to persons and organisations (including large companies) with the time and the money to acquaint themselves with the forward booking arrangements and who can act on this information—or to those who can send others to queue for them—or to small-scale entrepreneurs who buy tickets in order to resell them. This situation throws into relief the wider question of the incidence of the subsidies provided by the Arts Council. The funds of the Council come from the general body of the tax-payers. Much of its expenditure benefits very small numbers of people among whom the modish, the foreign visitors, and the relatively well-to-do are rather disproportionately represented.

2. The ineffectiveness of much of the local expenditure of the Arts Council, mentioned by Professor Blaug and Miss King, is not surprising. The grants are distributed outside London, but the subsidised activities do not seem to be financed to any great extent from local funds. If much more of the expenditure were derived from local sources (notably local authority funds) this would establish or develop direct links between those who pay and those who enjoy the results, or at least observe them. Apart from stimulating and spreading interest in the arts, such a course would probably reduce the subsidies to activities and projects which are largely ephemeral, or even mere hoaxes, or uninteresting political propaganda. It would also make it easier to assess the incidence both of the benefits of the subsidies and of their costs between various groups. Perhaps most important, it would go counter to the apparently irresistible trend towards centralised decision in public expenditure and thus ultimately in public policy. What matters in this context is de-centralised decision and not de-centralised execution of decisions taken centrally as in the original expenditure of Arts Council grants.

3. There is in this country a long tradition of private patronage or mixed public and private patronage to the arts, literature, and science. There is scope for more mixed public and private patronage of the arts, both on a national and on the local level. There are probably not many activities supported by the Arts Council which have done as much to bring serious music to impressionable children, especially poor children, as the Robert Mayer concerts have done. More support to this kind of activity might be a more valuable patronage than much of the expenditure of the Arts Council.

P. T. BAUER

London School of Economics.

Of Drugs & Theory

HENRY MILLER is at it again.

"The models of mental illness that appeal to the European neuro-psychiatrist", he tells us ["Of Drugs & Theory", September], "are those where a psychosis can be traced to an identifiable metabolic disturbance and improved by its correction." The deluded Americans, he explains, still cling to the notion that

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mental illness is in some way related to the patient's personal and psychological problems, rather than to "disturbed cerebral function and biochemistry." But in Europe, it has come to be realised that "the basis of the disorders is metabolic and they respond not at all to psychological readjustment but only to correction of the biochemical deficiency or anomaly."

Now, it is just possible that in the emptiness of time, medical scientists will discover a biochemical factor in every mental disorder. It may even transpire that a sample of blood or urine will be enough to secure the appropriate neuro-psychiatric diagnosis which, fed into a computer with all the relevant information about the patient, will provide the prescription that will automatically correct the biochemical deficiency or anomaly. But so what? We still will not know the answer to the essential question: What caused the metabolic disturbance?

Admittedly the treatment may still be the same even if the predisposing cause was emotional—but it may not be. There are hundreds of thousands of people in this country who are being given the psychotropic drugs in which Henry Miller reposes such faith—anti-depressants, bromides, tranquillisers, and so on—for tensions, anxieties, "moods." Can he really claim that these drugs are needed simply because of a plague of metabolic imbalance, unrelated to the mental and emotional background? If so, on what evidence?

Certainly not on the evidence of the publication which reached me in the same week as his article in ENCOUNTER: the report of a symposium on psychotropic drugs sponsored by the Department of Health (published by the Journal of the Royal College of General Practitioners). No doubt Henry Miller's new duties prevented him from attending; if he had, he would have found the prevailing mood about the drugs is by no means as breezily optimistic as his own. It is odd, for example, that the anti-depressants have not done anything to reduce the incidence of depression, as presumably they should have begun to do, by now. On the contrary, the rate of referral to psychiatric hospitals with that diagnosis—according to the *British Medical Journal*'s editorial, 18 August, on the symposium—has been rising. The prescribing of psychotropic drugs, the *BMJ* suggests, seems to be excessive: "perhaps we need to be more concerned with care and less with cure; able to recognise . . . that the understanding, comfort and reflective discussion the patient seeks do not necessarily require a pharmacologically active vehicle. . . ."

BRIAN INGLIS

London

BRIAN INGLIS RAISES too many issues to be dealt with, except by another article.

There are a few mental illnesses that can clearly be related to biochemical disturbances and be relieved by their correction, with a fair degree of predictability. There are many more where no such anomaly can be identified, but where the natural history of the illness renders this a strong possibility. There is no "Either-Or" antithesis since severe emotional disturbance may indeed provoke metabolic changes (though these may also occur for reasons unconnected with the patient's emotional life). What is truly remarkable is that no amount of talk—or environmental readjustment—will relieve severe depressive illness; whereas it can be significantly ameliorated in three-quarters of all cases by drugs, without either specific attention to personal psychological problems or significant alteration in the environment.

There is no evidence of a "plague" of depressive or any other kind of psychiatric illnesses—which have been known to medicine throughout history. Nor is there anything odd about the fact that anti-depressants have failed to reduce the *incidence* of depression, since they are given only when the illness has made its clinical appearance. They are ameliorative rather than prophylactic. The rate of referral to hospital with a diagnosis of depression (or any other illness) reflects current professional attitudes, therapeutic accessibility, and even diagnostic fashion. The plain fact is that anti-depressive drugs in depressive illness—and phenothiazines in some schizophrenic episodes—produce improvement entirely different in rate and degree from that with which we have long been familiar in the natural course of the respective illnesses. Incidentally, bromide went out with the ark and its only medical use is to produce mental confusion and skin rashes.

Mr Inglis can have his psychotherapist—I will keep on taking the tablets.

HENRY MILLER

The Vice-Chancellor,
University of Newcastle upon Tyne

Alexis de Tocqueville

IN HIS SOMEWHAT confused letter Mr Hugh Brogan (ENCOUNTER, July, p. 93) has enlarged into a major issue my passing remark that Tocqueville, whose honesty is beyond question, was not the fervent advocator of democracy many suppose, highly conscious though he was of its irresistibility.

An aristocrat of the *ancien régime* and a victim of the French Revolution, he declared his strict impartiality in the preface to the second volume of *Democracy in America* as he did elsewhere. In fact, in this volume he implied that what was good for America was not necessarily good for France. That he was by no means certain mankind had reached the shore of its salvation is clearly conveyed in a significant quotation in the March issue of ENCOUNTER (p. 3).

This is not as soul-shattering a view as Mr Brogan imagines, for "lip-service" does not always mean dishonesty. There is the sincere hypocrisy of necessity that Tocqueville is aware of, as we can see for example in his mention (Vol. 1, *Democracy in America,* "The Sovereignty of the People of America") of the Maryland upper classes who turned democrat. Mr Brogan himself seems to acknowledge such a quality when he says Tocqueville "sometimes found it hard to make up his mind."

Tocqueville wrote a great deal of uncommon sense, unlike his contemporary, the racially-minded Gobineau, also a declassed nobleman, and it is for this rather than his admirable virtue of honesty that he earns our unreserved acclaim.

NIEL HIRSCHSON

Johannesburg

MR HIRSCHSON MAY WRIGGLE as much as he chooses, but he cannot convincingly assert that Tocqueville was either dishonest or an enemy to democracy. Yet such assertion is all his reasoning amounts to.

To settle the matter, let us quote Tocqueville himself. He is writing in 1839 to his friend and translator Henry Reeve about the second volume of the *Democratie*: Reeve must not let his aristocratic prejudices

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colour his version of this volume as they coloured the first.

> "I write in and for a country where equality has won an irreversible victory over aristocracy. In these circumstances I have felt it my duty to dwell particularly on the evil tendencies to which quality *can* give birth in order to try to prevent my contemporaries from succumbing to them. . . . So I utter truths that are often unpleasant as to French society today and to democratic societies in general, but I utter them as a friend and not censoriously. Indeed it is because I am a friend that I dare to speak. Your translation must present me as such. I ask it not only of the translator, but of the man." (For the French, see Professor Mayer's edition, pp. 47–8.)

Tocqueville was a friend of democracy who put his searching and impartial judgment, and his transcendent intellectual honesty, at the service of his cause. If Mr Hirschson will only accept this almost self-evident proposition, he will also see how his earlier remarks tended to obscure it, and why, therefore, I attacked him.

HUGH BROGAN

St. John's College,
Cambridge.

Wittgenstein

IN THE PERSONAL MEMOIR of Ludwig Wittgenstein by Fania Pascal which appeared in your August issue, she describes Wittgenstein's "Confession" as being told in confidence to a few people. My recollection is that the Confession was also circulated by word of mouth to a number of people (including myself) at Wittgenstein's request. It would not appear therefore that Wittgenstein regarded it as very confidential, though he might have been surprised if he had known it would be published in your magazine more than two decades after his death! If he had known, he might have said something like: Good. If they want to understand what sort of person I was, let them know the worst. . . .

Fania Pascal says that Wittgenstein was "a man of great purity and innocence." However, quite apart from the incidents in the Confession (of which Fania Pascal mentions two while I remember three), Wittgenstein's behaviour, and his views on moral and ethical matters, were by no means always pure and innocent. He himself constantly stressed his own moral shortcomings, and I see no reason not to take him at his own evaluation in this respect.

My knowledge of Wittgenstein is based on private conversations and correspondence with him over a period of several years beginning in 1935.

GEORGE R. FFENNELL

Copenhagen

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Malcolm Bradbury is Professor of American Literature at the University of East Anglia and author of *Eating People is Wrong* and *Stepping Westward*. His essays on the state of the novel, *Possibilities*, were published by Oxford University Press earlier this year. . . .

Roy Fuller's essay is his final lecture as Professor of Poetry at Oxford University. It is included in his *Professors and Gods* (André Deutsch). . . .

George Watson is Lecturer in English at the University of Cambridge and a Fellow of St John's College. He is editor of *The New Cambridge Bibliography of English Literature* and his latest book, *The English Ideology*—a study of Victorian politics—is published by Allen Lane. . . .

Marcus Cunliffe is Professor of American Studies at the University of Sussex and the author, among other books, of *The Nation Takes Shape* (1959), *American Presidents and the Presidency* (1969), and *The Ages of Man* (1971). . . .

Robert Craft's latest book, *Prejudices in Disguise*, will be published in the U.S.A. by Alfred A. Knopf early in 1974. He contributed a Russian Diary of "Stravinsky's Return", to the June 1963 ENCOUNTER. . . .

William Letwin is Reader in the Government and Politics of the United States at the London School of Economics. His books include *The Origins of Scientific Economics* and *Law and Economic Policy in America* (Edinburgh University Press). . . .

Vamadeo Shastri is a scholar in Orientalist studies. . . .

Kenneth R. Minogue is Reader in Political Science at the London School of Economics. He is the author of *Nationalism* (1967) and *The Concept of a University* (1972), published by Weidenfeld. . . .

John Spurling is a playwright and critic. Two of his plays, *Macrune's Guevara* and *In the Heart of the British Museum*, are published by Calder & Boyars, and a television play, *Silver*, appeared on Granada Television this summer. . . .

Richard Findlater is an Assistant Editor of *The Observer*, a member of the Arts Council's advisory panel on Drama, and has served on two committees of inquiry—on the theatre and *Housing the Arts*. . . .

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Tangier

DAIRY STORY: May I [Alec Waugh writes from Tangier] correct an inaccuracy in Alan Brien's Diary last week.

My brother Evelyn was not conceived above a dairy in Finchley Road. My parents, who were married in October, 1893, moved two or three years later—I do not know the exact date—from their flat in Finchley Road to the house in West Hampstead, No. 11 Hillfield Road, where I was born in July, 1898, and Evelyn in October, 1903.

SUNDAY TIMES

Cambridge

SHELF SHELVED: *Lest there be any confusion, the "prominent Cambridge bookshop" which has labelled one case of books PORNOGRAPHY is not that prominent Cambridge bookshop W. Heffer and Sons ("We have not yet gotten around to such a high degree of classification, and doubt whether we shall consider it necessary so to do in the foreseeable future"), but its Cambridge rival, Bowes and Bowes, only a few doors away in Trinity Street.*

Bowes and Bowes is a wholly owned subsidiary of W. H. Smith. Its pornographic classification has already brought its protests; Lady Page, wife of the Master of Jesus College, Cambridge, writes that they have closed their account at the shop as a result, "as the only means open to us of acting upon our own intellectual honesty and showing that to some at least, permissiveness is not *academically respectable".*

A CAMBRIDGE *bookshop, Bowes and Bowes, has taken down the label "Pornography" from some of its shelves following a complaint by Lady Page, wife of the Master of Jesus College, Sir Denys Page.*

A spokesman for the shop said yesterday: "We do not have any hard-core pornography. We thought the classification honest and were trying to be lighthearted about it." Lady Page declared: "We are always being told about the silent majority. I hope this was a blow in the right direction."

THE OBSERVER

Strasbourg

BABEL: *At the European Parliament yesterday many of us were left with one eye shut and the other not open [Andrew Alexander writes]. The first day's proceedings were hardly calculated to stir one far beyond somnambulance. . . .*

It is certainly a happy coincidence that French is the language of three of the Nine. There is no language quite like French for saying nothing eloquently. German, even German poetry, sounds like a prolonged oath. Italian seems to rattle on too fast. English is too precise; Danish sounds a bit like broken glass, and the Dutch—though blessed with numerous virtues—cannot boast a musical tongue.

Ah, but French! As this Assembly and other assemblies prove, that is the language for gorgeous abstractions, sonorous nothingnesses, eloquent gesticulations and platitudes, platitudes world without end, amen.

Some talk, hopefully, of giving this Assembly elaborate powers. But it is hard to believe it could ever work like, for example, the Commons. Here, set-piece speech follows set-piece speech. It is rather like the House of Lords, only worse—which is a cruel comment on any Assembly.

DAILY MAIL

OUT OF JOINT: Tom Stoppard, the playwright, has produced a 10-minute version of Shakespeare's "Hamlet" which is to be included from today in the Ambiance Lunch-Time Theatre Club's programme at the Almost Free Theatre, Rupert Street. Though only four men appear as characters, Mr Stoppard claims to have covered the entire plot.

DAILY TELEGRAPH

London

PRESIDENT'S ENGLISH: *The editors of the eighth edition of "Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary" confess that determining pronunciations in a country like the United States is a major problem, so many people have their own idea of what is correct.*

Their expert on orthoepy—the study of correct pronunciation—Edward Artin, says he regards the late Adlai Stevenson as one of the best public speakers he has ever heard, but deplores the fact that (like so many of his fellow-countrymen) he favoured "eeleete" and "surveylance". Other American peculiarities he might have mentioned are "bewie" for buoy, "cupon" for coupon, "huvering" for hovering, "veehickle" for vehicle, "deepo" for depot, "deecoy" for decoy, and an invariable accent on the third syllable of advertisement.

When to admit a new word is always a problem, but President Nixon has made it with "netherworld" ("the netherworld of deceit, subversion and espionage"), although there is still some doubt about the neologism "logophag" invented by the columnist Stewart Alsop to describe Senator George McGovern on an occasion when he caught him eating his own words.

DAILY TELEGRAPH

London

FOUR-LETTER MAN: Only *The Guardian* **told its anxious readers yesterday the full shocking truth about what four-letter word Peregrine Worsthorne used on television on Wednesday. The** *Daily Mirror* **gave only the first letter,** *The Times* **had it as —— and** *The Sun* **made it ****, like a secret name from the Waugh diaries.**

It was simple to guess and I do not see, therefore, why we and the others should not have printed it.

THE TIMES

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It's strange, but people seem to think some scheduled airlines have different fares from other scheduled airlines. The fact is that Pan Am have exactly the same fares as any ordinary scheduled airline. The only difference is that Pan Am usually fly 747s which are bigger and more comfortable than any other kind of plane. We were the first airline with 747s and we now fly them more often and to more places than anyone else. Therefore, we're more likely to be going to where and when you want to. The next time you fly, perhaps you'll be flying the world's most experienced airline. At no extra cost.

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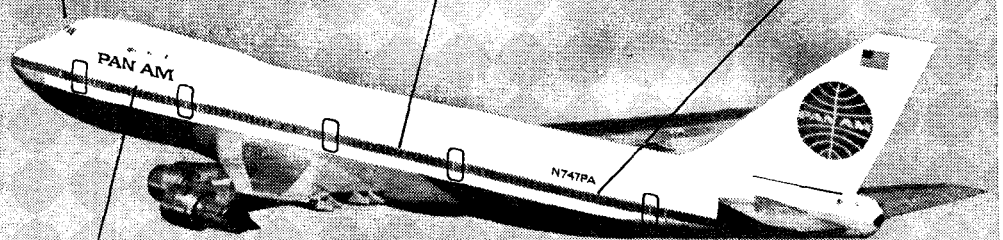

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